This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

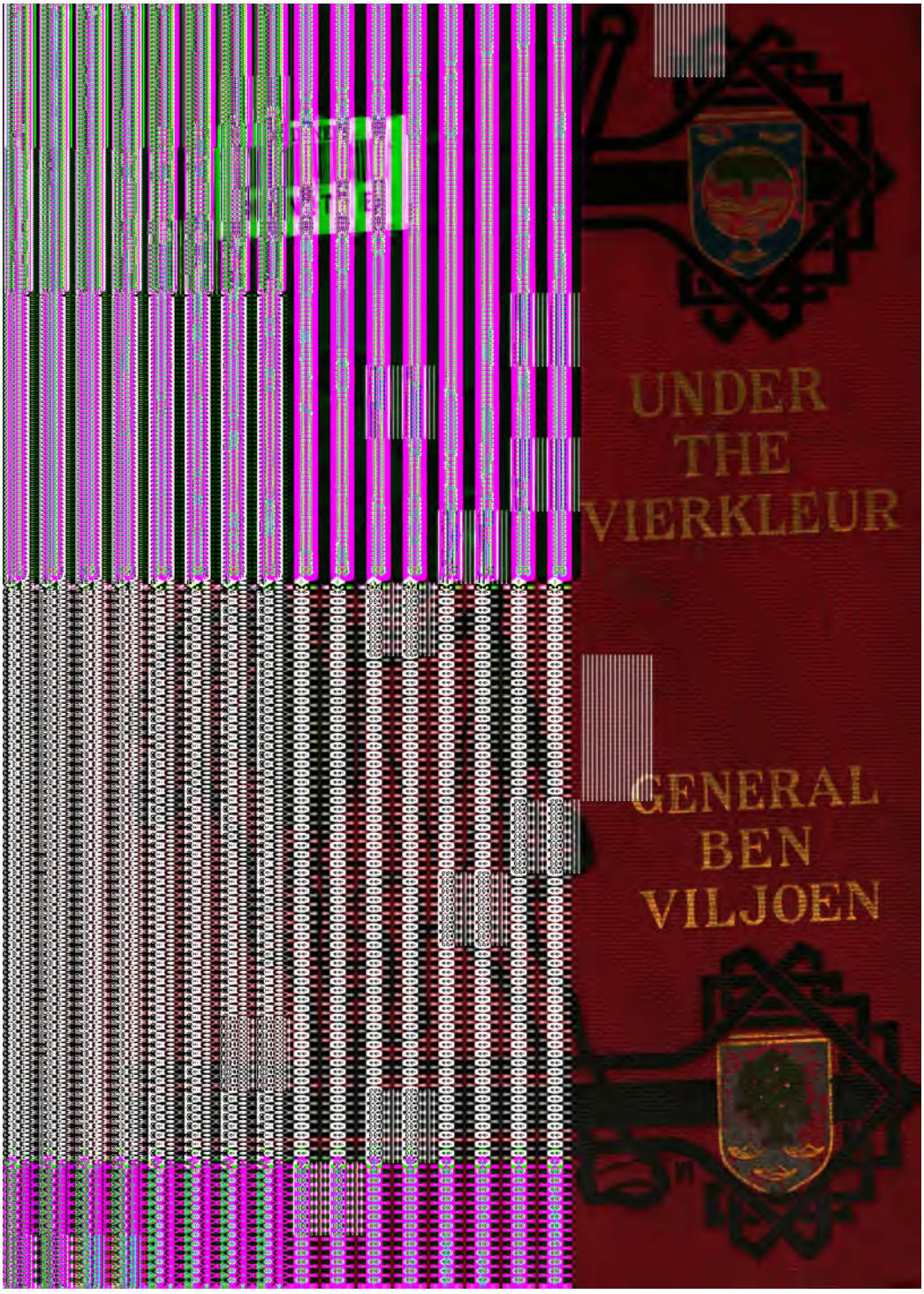
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

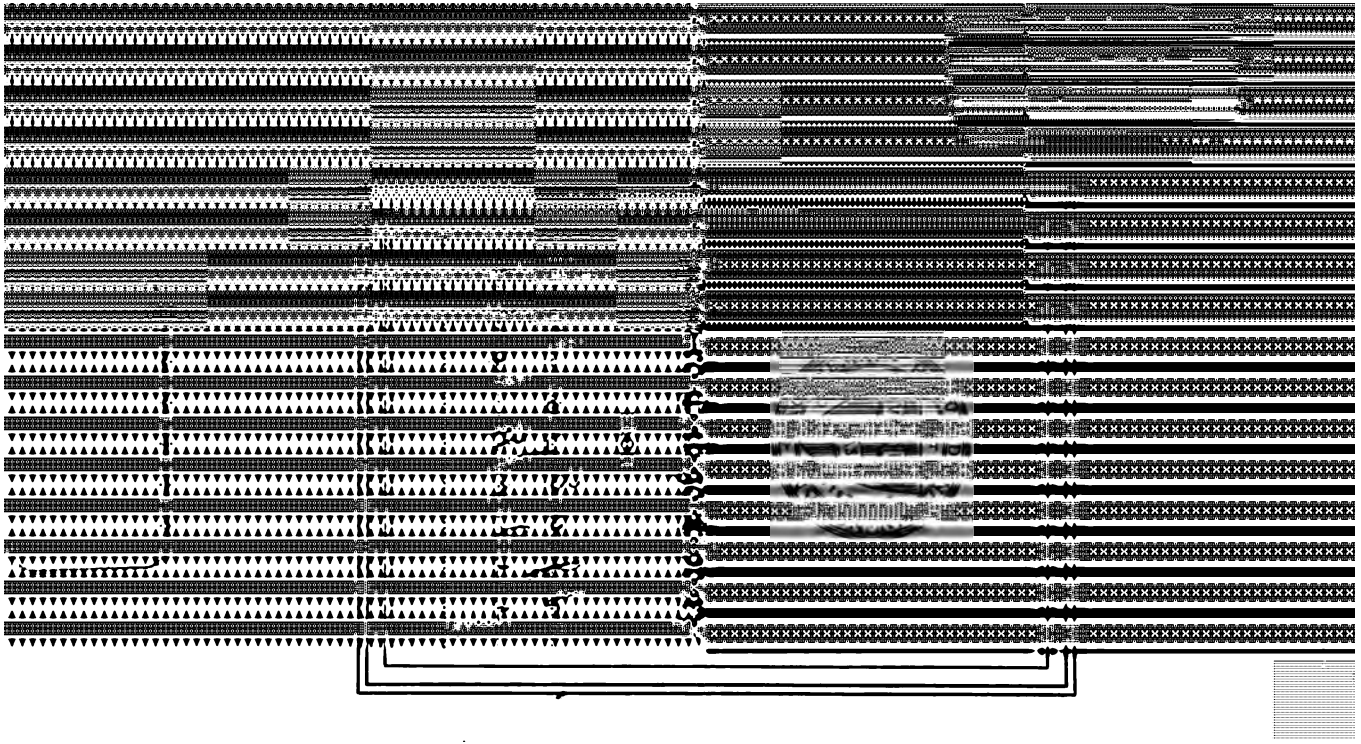
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

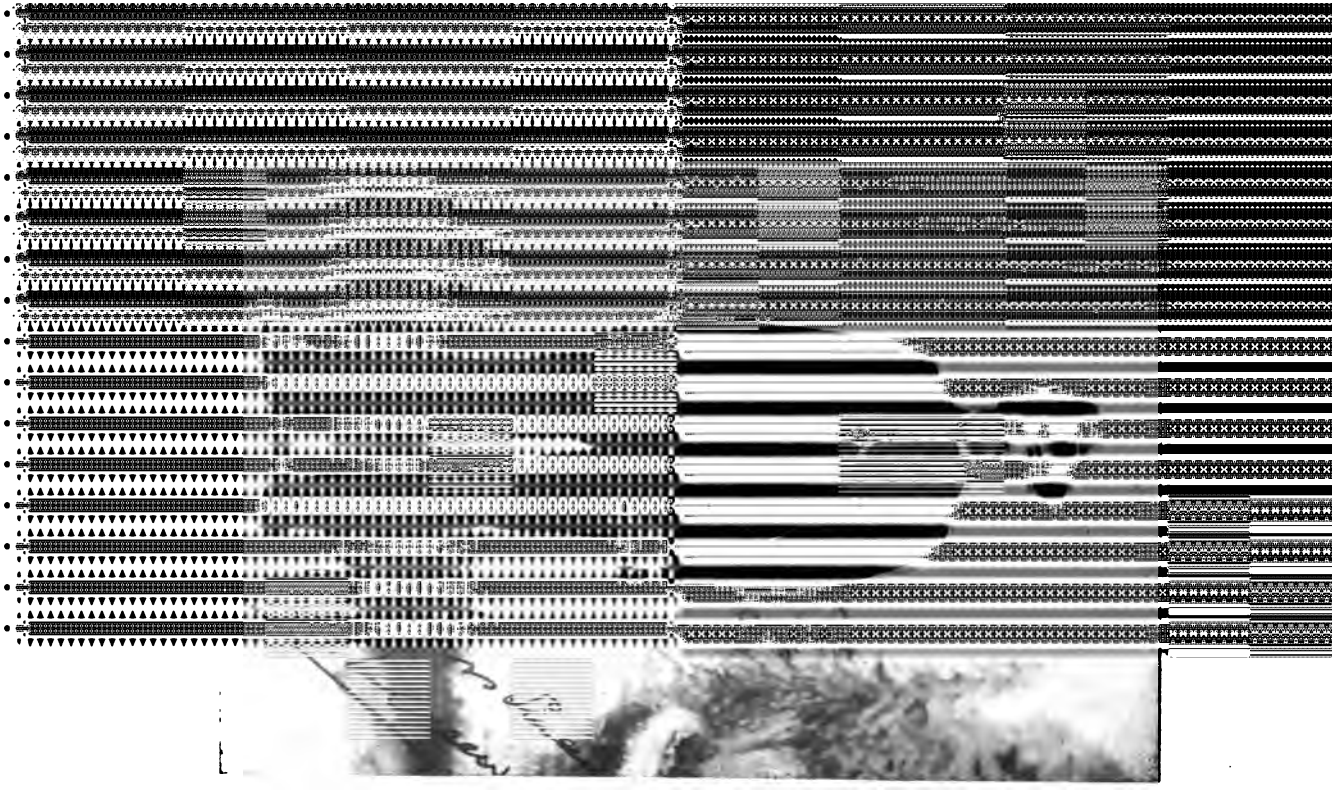
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

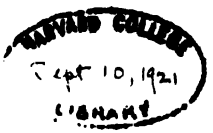

UNDER
THE
VIERKLEUR
GENERAL
BEN
VILJOEN



UNDER THE VIERKLEUR



23824.1.35
A



Lindsay Swift,
West Roxbury, Mass.

Copyright 1904 by
Small, Maynard & Company
(*Incorporated*)

Entered at Stationers' Hall

First Edition (7,000 copies) April, 1904

Press of
George H. Ellis Co., Boston, U.S.A.

To the Dearest Woman on Earth,

MY MOTHER.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Portrait of the Author . . . . . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

"A rifle swung high above his head" 36

"The surprised and pained animal made a mighty leap" 112

"Bettie had been riding ahead of the wagon" . . . 192

"Two great lines of cavalry were sweeping in at a full gallop" 298

"Before him stood Bettie, . . . her arms outstretched" 382

With the exception of the frontispiece, the illustrations are from drawings by I. B. Hazelton.

TO THE READER.

Before presenting this book to a foreign and a critical public, I want to offer a few anticipatory words of explanation. In the first place, the story is based on and its scenes are drawn from actual episodes of the late war in South Africa. I can guarantee the actuality, in more than general outline, of most of the incidents and episodes I have described; for the majority of them were drawn from my own experience, while the rest were told me by friends and acquaintances who passed through them and who played their parts in them. Insomuch, then, my story may be found removed from the ordinary tale of the tragedy or romance of American or European daily life.

I have tried to present my characters as truly and as characteristically as I could, without bearing too much either on their follies or their heroisms, the innate gentleness and simplicity of heart of their prototypes, or their general lack of those refinements of modern culture which the wide establishment of schools and systems of higher education alone can supply. For I come

of a simple people, and as such I have tried to describe them.

The Afrikander of the Republics has grown up in tumultuous times. Occupied in pioneering, in opening up new and wild countries, in fighting for his existence against wild animals and wilder savages, he has so far had little opportunity for the cultivation of his natural talents and abilities in quieter lines of development and knowledge. Educational institutions were remote and difficult to reach. His crude surroundings helped to mark him with their imprint, without, however, changing or hardening his conception of moral law, or his sure instincts concerning what is just and what is honourable. As a race, he has neglected, carelessly and with a most regrettable indifference, to contradict any of the misleading, the fabulous statements that for so many years have been sown broadcast with regard to him. The Bible he accepted as his indisputable law book, from which he drew his moral and social guidance. And to such moral ideals and social dictations as the Bible offers, he has always clung, still clings, insistently, even doggedly.

UNDER THE VIERKLEUR

It has been somewhat ungracefully admitted since the war that to some extent that conflict demonstrated the Afrikander to be possessed of high and even noble principles, revealed on many a field of battle; that his generous conduct, his chivalry toward his many wounded and captured opponents, was worthy of any civilised race. I hope I shall not be accused of flippancy or insolence when I admit that as a race we are too sublimely ignorant to appreciate a compliment so cheap, so stupid, reeking of so much contempt.

I do not feel the necessity of offering an apology to any of our late opponents, should anything in this book hurt their susceptibilities; for this is intended to be no indictment of wrongs committed, no attempt at paying off old scores. It is simply a story told without regard to person or creed,—a story the elements of which any Boer of South Africa knows by heart, one that every Englishman who took part in the war must recognise as fair and unbiassed.

My only and conscientious desire, when I commenced this work, was to place on record a small picture of the life and character of my

people, overshadowed by war though I had to draw it, and to try to do some little further justice to a nation so sadly misunderstood and so long maligned. That I wrote it in English, instead of having it translated from my mother tongue, was solely from the fear of losing by translation some of my real meaning. Much of my sympathy has gone out to the dear and patient American friend who assisted me in my work, and in putting the manuscript into shape for publication.

BEN J. VILJOEN.

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, U.S.A.
April, 1904.

UNDER THE VIERKLEUR

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

IT was a cool September afternoon. The cold, sharp north-east wind, so rare during the South African winter months, had quieted down to an almost significant calm. The dry leaves of the weeping-willow and tall blue-gum trees scarcely moved. The bright but cold sun was fast disappearing over the western horizon, and shed its golden rays in a last splendour across the looming Sekoekoenie Hills. And through the neks of the first ranges, steeped in the purpling shadows of the Sekoekoenie, you could see the towering peaks of the Lunubergen, far to the north-east of Lydenburg in the northern Transvaal.

The vast shadows cast by the randten, which almost entirely enclose the wide Origstadt valley, seemed to add to the silence reigning over the isolated Boer homestead that lay nestling at the foot of the hills. Baakenhoogte —for so the farm was named—enjoyed the reputation of an ideal Boer plaats: at this evening hour its ideality was almost impressive.

The softened outlines of the gums and willows, the neat green hedges around the gardens, the crystalline stream that rippled merrily down its course and past the front door of the homestead,—all seemed to whisper in Nature's own gentle voice of the supremacy of peace.

The little lambs were playing about the kraal, jumping from one stone to another and indulging now and then in a harmless contest with their soft unhorned heads. They could already hear the welcome bleating of the ewes in the distance, as the herd was being driven home by old Mintoor, the shepherd, whose "hok, hok," and whistle grew more and more distinct. The calves uplifted appealing voices to their mothers in the second enclosure, where the cows were temporarily separated from their anxious offspring until the boys should have milked them. Little Kaatje had washed and rinsed the buckets, and was pouring warm water over the hands of the milk-boys, Kiewiet and Klynjong, who perforce made this unwilling toilet regularly before they went to the milking. The horses, returned from the veldt,

were standing patiently by the stables to be let in; for the nights were chilly, and they knew what awaited them in the manger.

Fanie Linde, Baakenhoogte's owner, was seated under the veranda on the old Koejaten-hout rustbank, or sofa, whence he could see the kraals and gardens while chatting with his wife. He was a Boer of the old Voortrekker stock, whose seventy years had left him with a short but thick and silvery beard and a crop of dazzling hair, cut, fringe-like, low about his forehead. Tanta Annie, ten years his junior, who sat near him, radiated amiability and good-nature from a still smooth face. The two unmarried daughters were picking roses in the garden in front of the house; while Danie, their only brother, a finely built young fellow of twenty-five, whose strong and rather sharp features clearly indicated his Huguenot descent, was engaged in off-saddling in front of the porch, having just returned from the wheat and corn fields where he had been superintending the ploughing and harrowing since early morning. Before the young man could mount

the steps to join his parents, the elder sister, Lenie, called to him from the flower garden.

"Danie," she quavered, "we see a horseman coming up the big road from the Rustplaats. Can it be the commandeerman from the veldt-cornet already calling out the burghers?"

The general uneasiness due to a knowledge of the strained relations between Great Britain and the two Republics was immediately made evident by the start with which the rest of this quiet and typical family greeted her announcement. Danie, the first to recover himself, straightened up with a laugh.

"Well," he drawled, "what if it is? My Mauser is cleaned, my belt filled, and the biltong and biscuits are ready."

"My son," spoke his mother, quickly, "do not make a jest of war. It is too cruel a thing." She shuddered. She knew, alas! only too well how cruel. "May the good Lord avert it!"

Her early life rose before her,—its struggles, its hardships, the endless wars of the Republic, what with the fierce native tribes or with its old enemy,—and the already half-satisfied

hopes of a peaceful and quiet age, the half-realised dream of a home happy within, unvexed from without, clouded with new and pregnant fears. Devotedly attached to Danie, her only son, she foresaw what awaited her,—the inevitable heart-break of his departure, perhaps never to return.

Oom Fanie remained silent; but his set face showed unmistakably the painful nature of his thoughts. Lenie and Elsie joined the others on the porch, tremblingly awaiting the approach of the ominous visitor. Danie seized his field-glass, and levelled it at the horseman.

"Yes," he said, placing the glass on the window-sill, "it really is Pieter, the son of the veldt-cornet. I recognise the horse with the white face, too."

"I knew it," said the sad mother, with a sigh.

"Why, mother," said Elsie, trying to comfort her, "perhaps Pieter is only coming on a visit." But she knew her words belied her thought, and subsided into a frightened silence.

In a minute the rider came around the corner of the garden wall, and drew up in front of the

door. Dismounting, he greeted the family according to slow custom, his hat in his left hand. He shook hands individually, commencing with Oom Fanie, and took the proffered seat. His formal and unwonted manner,—for Pieter was a near neighbour and intimate enough with the Linde family,—and the look of importance (ill-restrained by courtesy) on his face, completed their conviction that his errand was no ordinary one.

"Well," he said finally, "my time is limited, Oom Fanie; and the sooner I make you acquainted with the purpose of my visit, the better we shall all feel."

The women spoke almost in the same breath. "Pieter, is it war?"

He did not look at them or give a direct answer. "All the burghers between sixteen and sixty years are called to arms to protect the frontiers," he replied. "I have been sent to commandeer Danie, and to appoint him commandeerman in my place to call out the rest of the burghers in the ward. Oom Fanie, of course, is over sixty. Therefore, I have but to

order from him a wagon and span of oxen complete for the commando. The burghers are to assemble in the dorp at four o'clock tomorrow, so there isn't much time to lose. Can you go at once, Danie?"

Danie Linde turned, and hurriedly left the porch without a word; but his haste indicated his eager determination. The three women followed Pieter Bodenstein to his horse, deluging him with questions. The unhappy emissary was scarcely able to answer one of them, and, feeling himself partly responsible for their tears, prepared to make off as soon as possible.

The father was left sitting alone on the porch. He recalled the many Kaffir wars he had seen; the great war for freedom in 1880, in which he had fought as an officer. He mourned the age that would now no longer allow him to fight for his country, and yet thought of his son, the real hope of his life, with mingled grief and pride. He had no doubt of Danie's conducting himself in a manner worthy of his traditions; he knew that he was brave and patriotic, in the prime of his youth and strength; he was

proud to be able to send such a substitute to the service of his country. On the other hand, he feared, like most brave fathers, lest his son be too brave,—lest he throw himself away, a victim to a too ambitious daring; and the innumerable dangers that insidiously flank the straighter path of the bullet lowered darkly before his mind.

Danie in the mean time had saddled his horse and returned, ready for his all-night ride.

"Mother," he said, as he took her in his arms, "see that the wagon and oxen are all ready for the commando, will you? I shall be back here, with the Lord's help, by nine o'clock in the morning, to spend a few more hours with you. After that I shall have to leave for the dorp to join the other burghers by four."

She nodded, unable to speak, and made way for his sisters to embrace him. Then Danie climbed to his saddle, and rode away to fulfil his first military commission, leaving his mother to support as best she could an absence which, although only temporary, was a truly bitter taste of what was to follow.

CHAPTER II.

SEATED by her bedroom window at the lonely homestead of Blaauwkop, in the district of Ermelo, was a pretty girl of barely eighteen years, black-haired and black-eyed, the tears coursing undisturbed down her round red cheeks. Her name was Bettie, and she was the youngest daughter of Dirk Uys, the master of Blaauwkop. She had been at her home but a few weeks, having returned from Pretoria, where she had spent the better part of three years at school in the State Seminary. An old friendship with Danie Linde, renewed and strengthened by his frequent visits to her home during her vacation periods, had budded, upon her last and final return from school, into an engagement, sanctioned as well by their parents as by the deep and sincere love the two young people bore each other.

On the same day on which Pieter Bodenstein so effectually visited the family at Baakenhoogte, the commandeerman of Ermelo rode to Blaauwkop, and notified Dirk Uys and his

three big sons that they were to appear the next day at the farm of Veldt-cornet De Wet, where the burghers of their ward were to assemble. So Mrs. Uys, like a thousand other tearful Boer women all over the country, had that evening finished the greater part of her preparations for her husband's and sons' departure for the frontiers. Bettie had faithfully assisted her, more than once mingling her tears with her mother's for their common grief.

But Bettie had a sorrow of her own over which she preferred to weep in secret. She was well aware that her lover could not, any more than her father and her three brothers, be spared from the ranks of those assembled to defend the country; nor did her pride for one moment allow her to indulge the hope that he might be. But the fact was not altered that Danie Linde, her first love, her only love, was to be—was, indeed, already—torn from her to undergo the dreadful chances of a soldier on the battlefield, perhaps on many battlefields, and that without even the poor alleviation of a last embrace, a touch of the hand, a look

of the eyes,—nay, nor the briefest meeting, if only to *say* farewell.

After the principal work of the day was finished, Bettie had silently retired from the family circle to the solitude of her own little room, where she might give rein to her sorrow and disappointment without restraint or embarrassment.

"O Danie, Danie," she cried, "have they taken you away from me without even a farewell? No, no, it is impossible!"

The evening wind was blowing softly through the window. She pushed it further open, and, leaning her elbows on the sill, bathed her hot cheeks in the welcome breeze. Her thoughts wandered into an unknown future, her imagination ran dark riot amid strange scenes in unknown places. She saw Danie riding away from her on his brown horse, his rifle and bandolier slung over his shoulder. His face was steadily turned away; but his manly figure compelled her admiration, held her love. She knew he was brave, that he was to distinguish himself. She saw him ride into, then rage in

the very heat of battle, striking, smiting, shouting, encouraging his comrades by word as well as deed. She saw the thousand English close in on the gallant little band of Boer heroes. She saw her lover carried at last from the battlefield, bleeding from many wounds, laid down on a rough stretcher in the meagre field-hospital, his eyes closed, a deathly paleness on his face. And her own face grew as white as she saw his. His vividly imagined agonies she all but suffered in her own tender flesh.

So deeply was she engaged in this self-torture, so far had she projected her mind into the unreal, that she did not perceive her mother, who, attracted by the girl's sobs, had entered the room and stood beside her. A touch on her shoulder roused her.

"Bettie, my child," said Mrs. Uys, "do not weep so much. You only make my sorrows the harder to bear. Your father and brothers are going to the war under the banner of faith, and our prayers will constantly be with them."

Bettie turned dumbly, and clutched tighter the photograph in her hand. Her mother saw

the motion, and understood. For a moment she did not speak, so completely was her heart occupied with the pangs of its own partings. Then she kissed Bettie tenderly.

"My child," she said, "God's hand and His care are stronger warrants for Danie's safety than anything else. The Boer cause is a just cause, and we need not fear lest He forsake us. Have faith with me, and we shall be the better consoled."

Bettie returned the warm embrace, and promised; yet, although she would not have admitted it, her vague fears were not stilled by her efforts at faith, but rather trembled lest, as Napoleon said, God fought on the side of the strongest battalions. She had read of wars in other countries; and she knew the history of her own people. In the old Kaffir wars many members of her family had fallen, while during the War of Independence one of her brothers had died, at Amajuba in 1881. She saw here little reward for her mother's faith. But of this she said nothing, and only prayed the harder.

CHAPTER III.

THE two Republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State rushed their fighting forces to the frontiers at the beginning of October, 1899. British troops were also being poured into the Cape Colony and Natal as fast as the steamers could bring them over the ocean. The war which had threatened so long, had seemed in fact inevitable after the Jameson raid of 1896, was suddenly hastened on by the active and earnest preparations of the willing contestants. England yearned for an opportunity to wipe out the stains of the defeats at Amajuba, Schuinshoogte, and Bronkhorstspruit in 1880–81. The young Afrikanders, armed by their energetic government, since the famous raid, with the most modern weapons, were on their side far from disinclined to oblige their old enemy. The fateful 11th of October—the date named in the ultimatum of Presidents Steyn and Krüger as the limit of the time allowed England in which to retract or retreat—was already a day of the past.

The commando to which Danie Linde belonged was ordered to the Natal border. It had to trek by the wagon-road as far as Machadodorp, there to entrain and proceed by rail through Pretoria and Elandsfontein to Volksrust. Danie had therefore no opportunity of seeing Bettie again. He asked the veldt-cornet to be allowed to go by the way of Ermelo and rejoin at Standerton, but he was firmly told that it was impossible to grant his request. So he submitted to his fate, and sent Bettie a telegram expressing his great disappointment at not being able to take leave of her in person for what, he rashly asserted, would prove only a temporary absence.

He had said good-bye to his mother and sisters in the little town of Lydenburg, whither they had accompanied him the afternoon he left home. The good lady, not content with gathering, mending, and packing with her own hands all his clothes and equipage for the field, had bought in the village—to make sure that he should not want for anything—an extra quantity of small articles (needles and thread,

soap, buttons, towels, brushes, and the divers like), until he had enough for ten men. With tears in her eyes she had adjured the veldt-cornet to look after her son, and had placed Danie formally in his care.

After a prayer by the local pastor the thousand horsemen had trekked out of Lydenburg to the round chant of the One Hundred and Thirty-fourth Psalm and to the echo of wild cheers for their beloved flag, the short-lived "Vierkleur." And, although many a man had been weeping in the arms of his mother or his wife only a moment before, never was the national anthem sung more warmly, the praise of the Lord chanted with stouter hearts, the flag of their country hailed with surer spirit, than at the beginning of that march.

At Machadodorp, Danie received a note from Blaauwkop. "Try to come and say good-bye," it read. "If you can't, it will break my heart. Yet, if it is really impossible, then God keep you till we meet again! Be as faithful to your country as to me."

He read and reread the little note. "Ah!"

he whispered, "she loves me truly. Yes, Bettie; and I will be as faithful to you as to my country, dear."

At Machadodorp came also the orders to the federal commanders to enter Natal and the Cape Colony,—the first blow of the war. Danie was called to the tent of his veldt-cornet.

"Danie," said the officer, "from to-day on you are my veldt-adjutant and secretary. I know you, and you know me. We are going to face the real music now, and it is of the utmost importance that I and my adjutant should understand each other."

"But," protested Danie, "your opinion of my abilities, although very flattering, is based on nothing. I don't know anything about war. I only saw a little life in the field with the Mapefu and Majaatjie commandos, and this is a war with a white people and a great nation. I am afraid I shall not come up to what is expected of me. Couldn't you appoint some one else?"

The veldt-cornet rose from his camp-stool. "Your first lesson should be to obey orders

without question," he said dryly. Then, "What nonsense, boy!" he continued more earnestly. "I know you for an able young fellow. Your father was a hero in his time, and it is possible that you have inherited something besides his modesty. Moreover, you have had the advantage—rare enough among us, I am sorry to say—of a good education at Stellenbosch. Nobody suits me better than you. Don't refuse the first promotion that comes to you, whether or not you think you have earned it. Don't stand in your own way: you will find plenty of other people there. There is, barring accidents, a long future before you. If it is to be a short one, why, so much the more do you want to make the most of it. I want you to begin getting out my orders at once. We are to march to-night with General Myer to attack Dundee. What do you say?"

Danie's dilemma was a brief one. In the midst of his doubts and reflections, his ambition and his fear of failure, the honour and the difficulty and danger of the duties, the pride that urged and the inexperience that warned

him, came suddenly the thought of Bettie, and of what he would have to write her. He hesitated no longer, and instinctively drew himself up as he answered,—

"Very well, Veldt-cornet, if you are satisfied to select me, I will do my utmost both for my country and my"— His face flamed so red that the veldt-cornet laughed at the betrayal. The new adjutant choked down the name upon his lips. — "my flag," he concluded lamely.

The veldt-cornet sat down again. "Very well," he said, "we will begin right away with the orders. The time is all too short."

The camp began to resemble a bee-hive with the promulgation of the first order revealing the intended advance. Men cleaned their rifles again, looked over their ammunition, counted the cartridges in their bandoliers, forgot the count, recounted them to forget again. Others were strapping their overcoats and blankets to their saddles hours before the movement was to begin, and while yet the coverings were needed in the camp. An unhappy and half-organ-

ised commissary department was distributing eight days' rations per man to a struggling, anxious crowd, every man of which wanted to be first or next served, and out of it. The slow wagons of the train were being indiscriminately filled, partly with necessaries of the march, although they were to reach Dundee a whole week later than the column. The tent of the veldt-cornet was besieged until long after dark by hosts of undisciplined burghers after one piece of information or another; and Danie found his regular and official duties but a drop in the bucket with those he was expected and compelled by circumstances to order, arrange, and perform.

It was late, indeed, before he found the time to write the letters that had weighed on his mind ever since his sudden promotion. His first was to Bettie. He told her all that had happened up to that time, and found that he mentioned his promotion rather reluctantly. He thanked her for the letter and for a package which had been delivered to him from her.

"It was as if I heard you speak," he wrote.

"I am so much happier since I heard from you, and am assured that you do not blame me for not being able to come to you once more to say good-bye. How joyfully would I have done it! The bracelet with the heart enclosing your picture I shall faithfully wear as a living remembrance of my Bettie.

"We leave in an hour. Our commando is a part of two thousand burghers who are going to march through Buffelriver on Dundee to attack the British garrison of five thousand under General Penn Symons. You have no doubt heard that war has formally been declared.

"I have still to write to my parents, dear; and already they are beginning to saddle up. So for this time good-bye, dear Bettie."

CHAPTER IV.

THE night of the 20th of October was drawing to an end. The village of Dundee lay still and unconscious beneath the rapidly fading stars. The great British camp, encroaching upon the outskirts of the widely grouped houses and stretching beyond their limits to the south and west, was beginning to take form and color under the edges of the approaching dawn. The camp-fires that had so brightly challenged the stars throughout the night were dying down for the want of a now unneeded attention; and the weary and unsuspicious sentries, walking their last rounds, were already looking forward to the time when the new guard should be mounted, and congratulating themselves on the day of ease and light duties that would soon be due them.

Beyond the town and camp to the north and east the prevailing character of the South African landscape was maintained by successive parallel lines of stony ridges, looking, as they overhung the inhabited plateau, like the long

ranks of rollers menacing a shore. But these long rollers of earth were no menace in themselves. Frozen in their tracks, the most they could do was to conceal what perils of a different nature lurked behind them. After all, they might be dangerous.

Just before dawn the nearest of these crests was topped by a little body of men, who immediately threw themselves to the ground, and, lying prone, watched with cautious interest the unwonted scene before them. They carried rifles, and were slung with bandoliers. The leader busied himself for a few moments with paper and pencil, as if taking notes for a description or a sketch of what he saw. Suddenly he rose, and beckoned to one of the men.

"Joost," he said, "take these back to Veldtcornet Bodenstein as fast as you can, and tell him that we are going a little farther down toward the village while it is still dark enough to make it possible."

"All right, Adjutant," said the man; and, taking the papers, he slipped over the brow of the randt, and was gone.

Adjutant Linde—for it was Danie—took another brief survey of the situation. A little to the left and three hundred yards down the slope lay, flanked by tall hedges, the loosely grouped buildings of the farthest outlying farm. It was evident that, from the shelter they afforded, a more complete view of the English camp, now partly concealed by a portion of the village, could be had. But the risk of exposure to anything like sharp eyes while moving down the hillside was great, and it was more than possible that an outpost of some kind was stationed at the very point to which he wished to go. He decided to attempt the trip alone. He gave his men a few parting instructions, and, leaving his rifle and bandolier with them, began to make his way downward, taking cover behind each boulder as he came to it, and laying his course so as to be as much concealed as possible by each as he approached it. From the last rock available he hurried across the open into the shadow of a hedgerow that led to one of the out-houses he sought. Moving carefully along under its protecting shelter,

his eyes scanning the building as intently as if they could see through it, he soon reached the goal he aimed for. Standing by the side of the barn, he looked beyond the end of the hedge that had concealed what lay on its other flank, and took careful note of that part of the camp now exposed to his view. He was about to skirt the building for a further inspection, when he was arrested by the sudden sound of voices, just around the corner, and apparently not ten yards away from him.

The start of surprise he gave cost him the first few words. Then a watch snapped.

"Four o'clock," said a voice. "I must go back to headquarters. The advance-guard starts across the hills to the north-east at five. Your picket will be withdrawn in half an hour, Lieutenant."

"Very well, Captain Campbell," was the reply. "Good-night."

"Good-night." And the sound of the speaker's departure was heard.

Danie hardly dared to breathe. Five steps more, and he would have walked right into

the hands of the picket, who, he could not doubt, would have received him with as much delight as surprise. He wondered that they could not hear his heart beat. If any one should happen to come around the corner of the barn! At the thought his hand stole nervously to his revolver. Then it came to him that here was news indeed, and that, having gained far more than he had either sought or hoped for, he must get back at once. Discovery would mean not only captivity, but the annihilation of his first, almost miraculous, and perhaps only chance to distinguish himself. He turned, and fled to the end of the hedgerow without another instant's delay. Up its further side he stole,—the side he had carefully avoided coming down, because it was open to the view of a great part of the sleeping camp. Yet he judged that he had more reason to fear the nearer danger of the picket he had discovered, and in comparison with that peril felt that the hedge, though serving only as a background, still promised him protection. He had indeed cause to be thankful for his choice. He had

scarcely taken ten steps behind the hedge when through its interstices he saw a soldier—evidently a sentinel—come around the corner he had just deserted, with the alert air that marks suspicion. The man looked along the side of the building, glanced hurriedly about him, and seemed to pierce the hedge with the sharp look he cast toward it. Danie felt it an all too insecure screen as his enemy gazed at it; nor could he understand it when the soldier withdrew his eyes, and, with another look around, retreated whence he had come.

"My soul!" thought Danie to himself, as he rose from where he had dropped, "how could he miss the signs of that trampled grass? Any Boer would have seen it at once."

In five minutes he had left the hedge behind him and was out in the open, working his way along on his stomach toward the first of the line of boulders he had used for protection on his way down. Hugging the ground with a closeness not entirely due to the patriotic affection he felt for his country, he crawled slowly and with frequent halts back to the old position

on the height whence he had started on his little journey of investigation.

He wrote his final report, embodying the important news of the enemy's projected movement, amid the congratulations of his enthusiastic squad, and rushed it off to his veldtcornet with the notification that he would await further orders where he was. The veldtcornet brought these orders in person, accompanied by the rest of the command, which was at once posted along the ridge.

"Danie," said his senior, "confess, you are a lucky man. The general, acting on your information, as fortunate as it is undoubtedly valuable, has given orders to commence the action as soon as the burghers are posted,—which, by the way, they should be now. Our battalion forms the extreme right of the line, and—Listen!"

His exclamation was drowned in a deep, double roar that burst from behind the hill far to their left, and which, as it died down, was succeeded by, almost merged into, the shrill, sharp scream of the shells from the two

Boer Krupps as they sped on their impolite good-morning errand through the air and over the startled British camp, to burst far beyond it in a rattling cloud of dust. A thrill such as he had never felt before went up and down Danie Linde's back as he watched the instant transformation of the strange scene before him, with the echo of the first heavy guns he had ever heard still booming in his ears. The camp, a moment before a quiet and peaceful dormitory, almost without motion except for the few indolent sentries on its outskirts, suddenly became a vast, flat hive of swarming men, rushing hither and thither in an apparently aimless confusion. The equally active outpourings of the village first rimmed it, then joined it, and almost instantly were lost in it. The faint notes of twenty different bugles added to the alarm. But the stirring sound of their ringing was cut short by a fresh roar from the two Krupps behind the hill, and this time the shells fell exploding in the very midst of the uproar their predecessors had caused. It seemed impossible that such teeming disorder

as he saw before him could ever be rectified under the circumstances; and Danie, half stunned, as much by the appalling sight as by the crash of the guns, was greatly astonished to see in the grey morning light thin lines of men already forming in front of the camp, and other groups rapidly organising behind them. Almost at once a series of short, bright flashes from behind a hitherto unnoticed stone wall—as if a dozen mirrors had suddenly been turned for but the fraction of a second to face the rising sun—caught his eye, and before he had ceased wondering what they meant, his ears, assailed by the light crack of the distant explosions, told him they were field-guns. The enemy had finally opened on him. Another battery opened to the right, and then still another. The thin line of the English had begun to move; and he was so absorbed in their even approach, the shreds they left behind them at every step, that he hardly realised for a moment that these shreds were torn from the line because the whole Boer force, including his own men, was pouring a rattling fire into the ad-

vancing enemy. The veldt-cornet was shouting at him through the din.

"Fire! Fire, man! What have you got a rifle for! And keep the men at this end of the line up to their work. I am going to the left!"

Danie nodded. He could not speak, but a mist seemed to clear away from before his eyes, his brain began to work with the activity and decisiveness of machinery. He suddenly realised that for ten minutes past it had been almost stupefied.

"They must not get beyond two hundred yards! They must not get beyond two hundred yards!" he murmured repeatedly to himself; and then turned and roared it at the men. He watched the English line, and estimated the distance carefully. They were still advancing, but with short rushes now, and longer and longer halts between, during which they lay flat and motionless. He could see their officers leap up to urge them, drive them on, as they came nearer. And it suddenly struck him with conviction that they would never arrive,—this time, at least.

"Their rests should be shorter and shorter instead of increasing in length," he decided for himself. He was learning war. He mentally made a note of this for use on some possible future occasion, and then turned around and calmly announced his conclusion to his men.

"Aim low,—two hundred and fifty yards!" he cried. "Two hundred and fifty yards,—fifty yards!" His sing-song voice reminded him humorously of the monotonic drawl of the auctioneer. But he hardly stopped to see whether or not his advice was followed: his eyes rested on the fulfilment of his prophecy. The British line rose once more to rush forward, wavered for a fatal moment, and broke in disorder instead.

The Boers along the ridge leaped to their feet with wild shouts of joy and triumph. They shook their rifles in the air like madmen, screamed hoarse derision at the retreating foe, even hurled stones after them. Danie, with a smile on his face, but anger in his eyes, ran from one to another down the disintegrated

line, striking, pulling, pleading. He shouted orders that were never heard, and pointed frantically outward over the field so lately occupied by the menacing attack. The five minutes it took him to bring his command into some show of order was none too soon. For advancing to a fresh assault was a battalion of lancers in open order. After the first second of surprise on the part of the over-enthusiastic burghers, they opened again with a withering fire. But the cavalry was being supported from its rear and flanks by the combined and now destructive fire of both the infantry that had been driven back and a battery of Armstrongs, whose shells began not only to disconcert, but to decimate, the defenders of the ridge. The men commenced to fall,—here one, there two or three. Danie's work was now cut out for him. With an activity and an indifference to the flying steel he had not dreamed himself capable of, he flitted up and down—erect—behind the men, emphasising his urgent exhortations by a frequent and effective use of his own weapon. His

eyes were everywhere at once. He drew the wounded to what safety he could find behind the edge of the ridge. At times he carelessly and as if accidentally pushed or pulled the dead to where they yet might to some extent serve the living as additional protection. He raved, he praised, he prayed. The lancers were already within the two-hundred-yard limit beyond which he had decided he could allow no attack to pass with safety to the position he held. Yet his furious efforts were temporarily successful. Unable to stand the terrific fire poured upon them by the seemingly inexhaustible Boer rifles, the lancers suddenly broke and turned, two streams of flight, to the right and left. The clouds of dust their movement had raised concealed for a deceitful minute or two everything behind the extreme limit of their approach. Danie dropped his hot rifle to his left hand, and wiped the thick drops of sweat from his reeking forehead with his right, while he turned to view the havoc wrought in his own line. One-half the men—a frightful percentage—were dead or wounded; and he knew

Read"...

that he could not long hold the partly demoralised remainder to a continuation of such bloody work. Already some were beginning to waver, to look behind them, in the direction of a possible escape.

All at once a long, deep roar burst on his half-deafened ear. In front of him the cloud of smoke and dust was lifting, was being torn and rent in a hundred places. And under its edges, through the constantly multiplying gaps and holes, a long and determined line of khaki-clad infantry was pouring, their muffled shouts rising to a yell that seemed to shake the very skies above. At last the English were upon him.

How many of his men deserted him, how many stayed beside him to stick it out to the end, he never knew. He caught a glimpse of some weapons cast to the ground, of some forms turned in flight; another of frantic men beside him leaping upon stones to fire madly or to swing their reversed arms against the up-sweeping mass,—and then he was shooting, clubbing, stabbing, in the very midst of a

shooting, stabbing, clubbing crowd, borne ever and ever backward. He caught a fresh glance of a pistol pointed at his heart, the red face and shoulder-straps of an officer close to him, a rifle swung high above his head,—and then the world sank beneath his feet, the sky reeled above him, as a million stars burst before his face and were swallowed up in utter darkness. His last conscious thought was not of his mother, not of his betrothed, not of his country, but only that he—he whose prospects of advancement and glory were so bright, he whose career had begun so fortunately—was being killed, *was* killed, in the first battle of a great and glorious war of which he alone was doomed never to see the end.

Then everything faded away; and he sank, an unconscious mass, inert to the ground.

CHAPTER V.

THE little town of Ladysmith in north-western Natal was, at the beginning of the African summer of 1899–1900, fully as uncomfortable as the red, unresting dust of the surrounding soil, and the heat radiated from the many metal house-tops and the innumerable awnings of the same corrugated zinc and iron,—designed to shade, but better fitted to stifle,—could make it. The long twin streets stretched side by side from end to end of the town, set with one-story stone shops in close and forward rows between the fewer and more retiring dwelling-houses, also of a single story, but surrounded by wide verandas and gardens red and yellow with the blown and powdered earth.

From all sides of the dusty plain in which Ladysmith settles—a bear in a bear-pit, at which all sorts of torments can be thrown from the encompassing walls, as the Boers soon discovered—the ground sweeps in ever-rising formations of rock and rubble, sometimes

splotched with groups of trees, to the convulsed and threatening hills that sweep around the plain in a rough but majestic circle of six or more miles in diameter. And like a piano-case dropped at random in the far parterre of this strange theatre of war stands Bulwana, the muddy little Klip running at full speed around an angle of the base of the great hill on its journey to the Tugela, ten miles away.

The battle of Dundee was followed on the part of the English by a rapid retreat to Ladysmith, where the authority of General Yule, who after the battle had led the retreat, was absorbed into that of Sir George White, who commanded at Ladysmith.

A curious series of errors had inaugurated the campaign in Natal. On the one side the Transvaalers had attacked Dundee with an inferior force, without waiting for their allies from the Free State, under the then Vice-Commandant De Wet. After the battle not only the English, but the Boers, retreated. Two days afterward—two days too late—De Wet with his Free Staters cut the railroad line

below Dundee to find the back trail of the English cold. Then, without waiting for the Transvaal forces to recover from the effect of the fight at Dundee and join him, the intrepid De Wet followed on their heels, and enticed them out of Ladysmith to fight at Modder Spruit,—a fight which ended practically without result. It was not until a week later that the Orange Free State and the South African Republic, at a joint council of war held November 1, decided to lay siege to Ladysmith. On that very night Cronje moved to the positions afterwards so long occupied by Botha, south and south-west of the town; and the four months' siege began.

From the first hour the fire of the besiegers was as accurate as it was constant, and the incessant shells yelled and burst monotonously night and day in and above the town and works. On or near the 10th of November, when the Boer guns began to increase from the surrounding hills, General White made arrangements with General Joubert for the establishment of a neutral camp, where the sick and

wounded, the prisoners and the non-combatants, might be free from the fire. This camp was established about four miles from the town, on a flat and windy plain somewhat to the south-east and toward the direction of the expected relief. This city of canvas—for it was built of nothing else—lacked many of the comforts of the town of which it was now the miserable suburb, but it was safe and healthy. The great fly-tents of the hospital, where wounded Briton and wounded Boer lay in brotherly discomfort, were cool and quiet, and their inmates fared better than might well have been expected. There was no lack of nursing. One of the annoyances—the great curse, indeed—of the place was the want of occupation and amusement. Even the Boer fire lost its interest for the inhabitants as soon as they learned to realise that it had nothing more to do with them. So the women nursed. Those that did not nurse sought the opportunity, toward the last importunately.

In one of the beds in the smallest hospital tent a man opened his eyes one bright morn-

ing toward the last of November. He did not stir otherwise, and even his lids lifted gently and hesitatingly, as if from a long sleep and with a recollection of evil dreams which a single physical motion on his part might bring back with a leap from their slow and unwilling retreat. For minutes the white, cool canvas above him and the open flap through which he could see into a hazy, green country were but an unstable background of reality, against which only very gradually decreased the kaleidoscopic phantoms of a long-unbridled mind and a memory just struggling up from stupefaction. At last the horrors cleared away, and he commenced to direct his thoughts. This power of direction—so simple that we never realise its value unless under similar circumstances or in the presence of the insane—filled him with a weak pride. He could feel in some strange way that it was new, and that it was well worth having. His identity, however, had not yet come into his consideration. He was satisfied to know that he was something, alive, at peace with the present, and compe-

tent mentally to examine and pass upon the still un-understood circumstances in which he found himself. He went at it slowly. His eyes soon dropped from the comprehended covering of canvas to the top of the opening of the flaps, and rested on a baseless wedge of unclouded blue, across which, nevertheless, there seemed to be the golden spell of a sun, the brightness of days he had known and now instinctively recognised. The influence was soothing: his hardly awakened mind sunk drowsily back into a happy apathy. He still regarded the blue with eyes that were lazily at rest rather than set or fixed. Suddenly a little black speck trailed diagonally up across the bit of sky, and hung there in the centre of his vision. He could not tell whether it was a bird far distant or a gnat at hand. It was just a speck, —there was no background, no perspective. A fly, a bird,—no!—it had disappeared, and in its place there was a little cloud, a puff of wool, a tiny fleece. Curious! It roused him more. Then there was a distant rush, a whistle that he knew, yet could not place, and a sec-

ond fly, a second bit of cotton joined the first, now almost dissipated. Then a dull shock, that seemed the banging of a door far off, startled him; and then another, and another, and another! A great revulsion of his peace of mind nearly upset it once more. With a quick rush of memory the blood surged to his head, and nearly blinded him. Where was he? His heart beat furiously. He raised his head and bent his back in the effort to rise. But he fell back with a weak groan. His eyes closed, and his ears—was he not being spoken to? He reopened his eyes feebly, but his astonishment put new strength into them. Two women stood above him, bending down,—two strangers; and a man stood beside the bed,—he was in a bed!—and held his wrist. He wanted to speak; but he found the effort difficult, and desisted. One of the women stooped and raised his head, and the man placed a glass to his lips and tipped the contents of the glass against them. They opened mechanically, and he swallowed.

"More," he whispered in Dutch.

The man with the glass looked puzzled, and, turning, beckoned. A second man, with a cheerful smile on a pale face and crutches beneath his arms, hobbled up to the bedside. The eyes of the new-comer asked a question. It was obvious.

"More," whispered Danie, in Dutch, again.

"He wants some more," said the new man, cheerfully. "Better give him some, doctor, eh? Incidentally, I'm feeling rather weak myself. A tot"—

"No, no, Captain," laughed the other. "No more for either of you. Alcohol isn't the best thing for open wounds,—unless they are like his," he added gravely, turning toward the man in bed.

Danie found his voice under the stimulus of the drink. "Give me some water, please," he said, still speaking the Taal; then in English, "Are they so bad, doctor?"

"Eh? Bad? What bad?" said the astonished surgeon. "What business have you got to talk,—a man in your condition? No! No! There's nothing the matter with you,—noth-

ing to speak of. What nonsense! Damned if I don't think you're goin' to live!"

"I am," said Danie, quietly, and closed his eyes.

He spoke no more that day, and toward evening fell into a healthy sleep that lasted quite through the night.

The next morning, when he awoke, he found the cheerful man sitting beside him, his crutches under his chair. Danie's faint smile of recognition was returned with interest, and with a nod of the head complicate with pleasant meanings. Only to the regular surgeon and the nurses did this jolly visitor finally release his silent ward.

On the last day of a week spent chiefly in dozing and in feebly trying to disentangle dreams from recollections, among both of which the cheerful man's face figured preponderantly, Danie awoke with strength to break his silence.

The cheerful man was in his place.

"Good-morning," said Danie, smiling.

"Good morning, indeed," returned the other, looking closely at him. "How do you feel?"

"Why,—rather funny, I think, but still not so badly," said Danie. "I should feel better if I knew more about it. Where am I? Will you tell me?"

"I'll tell you all about it. Of course, you want to know," said the other heartily. "My name is Campbell,—Captain Campbell of the —th Lancers,—and you and I first had the pleasure of meeting at Dundee. This is Ladysmith,—or a camp just outside it,—and your people have got Sir George White and thirteen thousand more of us shut up here. Been here ever since Dundee."

Danie was startled. "Since Dundee? And how long is that?"

"Six weeks to-morrow, my boy."

"Good Lord!" said the Boer. "What do my people think? Has any word been sent? Do you know?"

"I'm afraid I don't know much about it," said Campbell, deprecatingly. "You see, I've been in hospital, too, ever since then, and am only up two weeks myself. You were much the worse off, however; and nobody thought

you would live. You have to thank your constitution and my poor shooting, among other things."

"Yours?" questioned Danie, wonderingly.

"Mine among others, Mr. Linde. But I only returned you a favour. It was you who so rudely shot me through the legs before I had ever so much as seen you."

"I beg your pardon for the damage," said Danie, smiling; "but you must have somehow got in my way. I didn't see *you*."

The Englishman laughed. "Never mind," he returned. "I'll apologise, too. I got square with you."

"You did," said Danie, ruefully. "Tell me some more details. Why am I here?"

"To get well, I hope, my friend," said Campbell. "We were brought down together in the same ambulance on our retreat from Dundee. Why we retreated, I don't know. Nobody knows. Your people retreated, also, after the battle. You had a lance through your side, two or three bullet wounds of less importance,—one of them mine,—and were

knocked on the head with the butt of a musket. Pretty badly off. We've been here under siege from your people ever since. Except that the hospital is in the neutral camp, a couple of miles outside the town, with the women and children, so your people do us the honour of firing over us, and not at us."

"How goes the siege?" asked Danie, eagerly.

"I don't know—very well. We only have communication with the town once a day through the provision-train, which brings us worse and less stuff every morning; and we don't get much news. I rather think there isn't much, you know. Of course, we shall be relieved very soon; and the war will be over before winter * at the latest."

Danie thought a moment. "How did you know my name?" he asked.

"Oh, one of your men told us when we took your position."

Danie brightened. "Then you have more of us unlucky Boers here as prisoners? I should like to see them if I may."

* The South African winter begins in May.

Captain Campbell looked out of the tent into the fields. His voice was embarrassed as he answered. "I—I am afraid—there were no more prisoners taken. Very few men stayed with you, you know. I think you were brought along because you were an officer, and, after things were quieter, they found you weren't dead, you know."

"And the poor wounded were left on the field?" exclaimed the Boer, in horror.

"They were left on the field," repeated the captain, dryly. "My regiment had lost over two hundred men. It was their first fight, and they weren't very nice about it. And, then, you fellows *tried* to get killed."

"I did," said Danie, gloomily. "But I'm very glad I wasn't," he added with a smile.

The captain rose, and, balancing himself at the head of the cot, held out his hand. "So am I," he said heartily. "And let's drop the subject for the present. We're both doin' splendidly; and, if you'll let me say so, we're not such devilish enemies as we were, you know, six weeks ago."

Danie seized his hand gratefully. "We are friends, indeed," he said. "Don't think I don't know, at least for the last week, how you have sat by me, and watched me, and given me water when I wanted it, and all things like that. I couldn't talk then, and I wasn't in my mind all the time; but I *know*. I won't forget it. We may meet again, possibly under different circumstances. I may be free any day. The Boers will surely be able to take Ladysmith"—

Captain Campbell sat back in his chair. "No, Linde," he answered, "I'm afraid not. And, anyway, you won't be here to see it if it does happen. You are too valuable a man to give back," with a smile, "and we are going to send you to Pietermaritzburg while we can still get a few non-combatants out of the way. I shall be able to walk myself in a few days; and I am going back into Ladysmith, so that I couldn't look after you any more, in any case. But you need have no fear but that you will receive the best treatment at 'Maritzburg. And," he hurried on, as he saw Linde's face

fall, "I promise you that I will try and get word to your people that you are alive and all right."

"If you will," said Danie, earnestly, "you will double your kindness to me; for my father and mother—and—and,—I will tell you frankly, my friend, there is somebody else, too,—will be wild about me if there is no news. They must think me dead now."

"Well, we shall soon correct their erroneous impression," said Campbell, cheerily. "And, by the way," he added, "I almost forgot—isn't this yours?" And he held out the little bracelet containing Bettie's miniature.

"Yes," called out Danie, "indeed, yes! I knew I missed something, but I was too sick to think what, the whole past week. How did you get it? Please give it to me!"

The Englishman leaned over, and fastened it again upon his new friend's wrist. "You are in luck again," he smiled. "The last man who shot you—one of my own—robbed the 'corpse,' and afterwards handed me the booty, when he found that you were being taken

along in the ambulance with me. And I have kept it for you ever since."

Danie thanked him again as if for his life. Then, partly to explain the seriousness of this second gratitude, he opened the miniature, and showed it to its preserver.

The Englishman drew a breath. "I see," he said slowly; "and, if it is in my power, I will relieve the lady of what anxiety I can on your account, believe me."

"I am sure that you will," replied Danie; and the subject was dropped.

The next four days passed dully enough. Captain Campbell was absent; and Danie, tired, but stronger, thankful for his new life and strength, but irritated at the remnants of torture that still racked him when he moved, proud enough of the past, perhaps,—for he was young and in love,—but hopeless as to the future, could think of no explanation for his friend's—was he really a friend?—absence but such as reflected on himself, or his race, or his confidences. On the morning of the fifth day, Campbell entered the tent in uni-

form and crutchless. He staggered as he walked, but he stood as straight and broad as one of his discarded supports.

"It is good-bye, old chap," he said with a friendly grip of the hand. "To-day I go back into the town, and to-morrow you start for 'Maritzburg. We shall see each other again, I know. Until then good luck." And he turned on his heel, and left the tent.

And poor Danie spent the rest of the day wondering why he had not been able to find his tongue.

The next morning at eight o'clock he was "stretchered" on to an ambulance wagon with plenty of company. At twelve he was transported to a train at Colenso,—escaping by mere hours the opportunity of being recaptured by his victorious friends when they clashed with Buller's advance there,—and was passed smoothly on without interruption to Pietermaritzburg, a hundred miles further south, in the heart of the loyal Natal.

CHAPTER VI.

THE little district of Ermelo in the south-eastern Transvaal is separated from Natal territory by a narrow strip—only thirty miles wide—of the district of Wakkerstroom. Natal, reaching greedily north, pushing itself forcibly right into the body of the Transvaal, cuts a pie-shaped wedge out of the southern centre of Wakkerstroom, causing this despoiled district's borders, at the point of section, to serve as the sides of a deep re-entrant angle. This cape, this promontory of Natal, which juts north into the even sea of what was formerly the Boer Republic, is the door that opens from Natal into the next room in the house of Africa,—the Transvaal; for its very tip is at the point of the fairest pass across the northern Drakensberg, and through this pass and down the very centre of the promontory runs the railroad, as far south as Pietermaritzburg, as far north as Pietersburg, two hundred miles beyond Pretoria. This door is one that swings both ways: it opens into Natal as easily as

into the Transvaal. A dozen miles south of the pass and in Natal territory are two localities known by the names of Amajuba, or Majuba Hill, and Laing's Nek. They won their notoriety at a time when the door had been opened to the south.

But early in May, 1900, the door opened the other way. About the beginning of that month the English troops recovered their activity after the short period of rest in which they had indulged upon the closing of the campaign on the Tugela and the relief of Ladysmith, and began to drive the Boers, disheartened by the surrenders of Cronje and Prinsloo and the death of Joubert, out of the Biggarsbergen northward into the Transvaal. By May 31 Johannesburg had fallen to the main column of the enemy, and the south-eastern districts, including Ermelo, were occupied or being traversed by active, if smaller, bodies of the English, invaders in their turn. Many of the original commandos that had so successfully fought in Natal during the earlier months of the year were now, depleted in

strength and in spirit, conducting a desultory mountain warfare throughout these same southern districts.

Ermelo was as badly off as any. Those of its burghers who still considered themselves subject to their old organisations had been called north to Pretoria by General Botha, who had hoped to make some sort of a defence of the town. Those who had remained in the district with the purpose of defending their homes were hardly able to do more than to annoy the enemy, and sometimes to retard his advance. The homesteads and farms throughout the country-side were for the most part manless, or only received their masters at odd times or when the British columns were still far away. Blaauwkop was in straits. Its owner and his three grown sons had been absent, except for one brief visit, since the beginning of the war; and the whole management of the place had fallen on the shoulders of Bettie and her mother. The Kaffir servants had grown more and more slack as time progressed and no men returned to

look after them. Several had taken French leave. Most of those that remained on the farm had assumed the habit of disappearing from time to time for a day or two, or even for longer periods, and of coming back heavy with the beer of some native village, a little more sullen, a little more insolent, than before.

Old Maliwe was an exception. His Hottentot mother had died grey in the service of Bettie's grandfather. He himself had been born in the family, and considered himself to all intents and purposes as one of them. As far as he could, by the power of delegated authority, backed up by the known fact that he always went armed at the wish of Mrs. Uys, he ran things over the other servants with a high hand. It was he who slept first in the cattle-kraal, and later, when worse dangers threatened, in the front hall-way of the dwelling-house itself. It was he who went to the fields with the two women in the day-time, and, while apparently working as hard, if not harder than the rest of the servants, managed always to be in the vicinity of his mistress

and her daughter. It was he who ran, for all his sixty years, beside Bettie's horse when she went out into the veldt late afternoons to gather the scattered groups of ewes and lambs for the night. Many a setting sun saw Bettie and her two little brothers, Gert and Egbert, riding homeward, each with a lost and complaining lamb slung across the saddle to return to its careless mother, and the old Kaffir trotting tirelessly behind the horses, sometimes with a fourth little one across his own thin shoulder.

The little family had few visitors, and went on even fewer visits. Their nearest neighbours were six to eight miles away, and the little village of Ermelo, the "shire town" of the district, lay still further from them, and held not even the attraction of news; for the single wire to Standerton and the railroad south of them had long been cut. Once in a while a stray burgher, ragged, disheartened, and disheartening, dropped in upon them. When such a man came, he was given food and drink and all the comforts of the house, as if he were

the commandant-general himself; and then the women hung around him with questions. Mrs. Uys's first demand was always, "Have you seen or heard of my husband or my sons?" and Bettie's, "Can you tell me anything about Danie Linde?" But they never got in reply to these questions more than a shake of the head and a recital at length of the woes partly of their country, chiefly of their guest. It was very unsatisfactory. At times Bettie went so far as to blame Danie for not letting her know of his existence. A man ought to be able to do that much once in nine months, if he really loved a girl. She would carry this unhappy thought in her mind perhaps a whole afternoon. The next morning she would wake with a heavy sense of guilt, of cruelty, of unfaithfulness, and by noon she would have convinced herself that her lover was dead. The strain upon her nervous system grew. Naturally a very reticent girl, she ended by making her mother the confidante of these two extreme moods when in succession they seized her; and that poor woman, although she really

thought the last supposition the more reasonable, nevertheless, being between the devil and the deep sea, invariably proclaimed her belief in the former. Bettie, with her changed disposition, was better off in a state of cynicism than in one of despair. It was the poor girl's first experience of any of the great emotions; and she was now experiencing them all at the same time,—love and grief, and jealousy and fear. They usually follow each other and in a somewhat different and more logical order.

In the early part of their solitary isolation at Blaauwkop, Bettie and her mother had made a point of having as cheerful evenings as possible on the farm, for their own sakes as much as for those of the children. But, without Mrs. Uys being able to control it, this custom had drifted into desuetude through Bettie's growing inability to contribute any gayety or lightness of her own to such evenings. Where she had at first enjoyed playing the piano and singing, especially the few songs that she remembered to be favourites of her

lover, now she left the instrument untouched, and never even sang about the house as she had done all her young and happy life. Her mother made but one attempt to persuade her, after several evenings had passed without her accustomed music. The result was such a storm of grief, lasting long into the night, that she at once forbade her younger children to mention playing to their sister again.

The girl was no moper: she hung in no dark corners, she shirked none of the commonplace duties. On the contrary, it was her pride by her own exertions as much as possible to keep the farm and the crops up to or near the standard of her father's time, before the war. She was physically healthy, she was strong, and the red blood in her firm little cheeks withstood victoriously even the efforts of the sun to conceal her blushes by the coat of brown it endued them with. She was in the saddle a large part of every day. Her lithe body grew even more straight, her dark eyes even more clear and deep, her black hair even more glossy and luxuriant, her muscles, her wrists even more

supple and rounded. But her heart weighed within her day and night; and her mother, although a woman of little perspicacity, as of few resources, could see plainly how her nature, even her mind, was wearing under the strain. The elder woman understood at last that a change—either good or bad, but a change of some sort—was the one thing that would help Bettie above all else. And from thinking of some change and of the hundred ways in which it might announce itself, and even hoping for it, she finally got to expecting it, even to believing in it. Consequently, she was calm and unastonished, almost relieved, when one early June evening old Maliwe, coming from the cattle-kraal, called from the stoep into the house: "Old mistress, come quick! There are two suns setting!"

"Ah!" she said, "now it has come." And she went out to the Kaffir on the stoep. He was pointing to the north-east, in the direction of the town of Ermelo.

It was already dark with the quick darkness of African nightfall. She turned around.

Behind her was actually the sunset, a deep red glow whose brightness was even then visibly fading. But Maliwe's second sunset, the one in the east, was, on the contrary, growing as visibly brighter. She called Bettie and the children.

"Maliwe," she said, "that is fire at Ermelo. The khakis are there."

"Mawo!" answered Maliwe. "You are right, mistress. It is fire, sure enough. I thought the sun had broken in half and one piece had been left behind, or Impandulu [the lightening] had upset its nest. But you are right: it is fire. The khakis are there. May they not come here!"

"They will come," said Mrs. Uys, pointing out into the gloom toward the gardens, "as those are going. Look!"

"Ewe, ewe," said old Maliwe, "they are going, certainly. Let them go, the dogs. We are safer without them. Yet I will watch tonight."

Down by the kraals, so barely visible that the very sound of their murmurs of surprise

and excitement helped the group at the house to pick them out, were gathered the other black servants; and, from the dim mass that distinguished them in the darkness, single figures could just be seen flitting away into the night, noiseless and in even succession, as bats slip forth from the eaves at dusk to disappear one after another.

There was little sleep at Blaauwkop that night. The morning dawned bright and clear. No smoke, no trace of fire, showed to the east; and toward noon Mrs. Uys spoke to Maliwe, who was hanging around the house, contrary to his usual custom.

"I was frightened for nothing, Maliwe. It was just a fire in the bush, and not the khakis, after all."

Old Maliwe shook his head slowly. "No, no, mistress," he said. "You were right enough. The 'boys' would have been back before daylight unless something strange had happened. It is the khakis without a doubt. There is not a Kaffir on the whole farm." He excepted himself, as always, by reason of his

association with the household. Was he not a member of the family?

In the middle of the afternoon Gertie and Egbert, who had been playing out beyond the kraals, came running to the house in great excitement.

"Mamma, mamma," called Gert, "there are horsemen coming fast up the road! I am sure they are khakis!"

She was at the door in an instant. The boy tried to rush past her. "I will get my gun," he cried. "They shall not touch you or zus' Bettie!"

"Gert, come here!" she cried at him with the fierceness of fear. "My God, leave your gun alone!" She clasped him to her bosom with straining arms, as if with some dark presentiment of evil, and faced the horsemen who even then drew up before the stoep.

An officer rode a step forward, and lazily raised his hand as high as his shoulder in a half-salute. "Mrs. Uys?" he asked.

She turned her head over little Gert's, and called into the house, in Dutch:—

"Come, Bettie, come and tell me what they say. They are talking to me."

Bettie came running. As she stood in the doorway behind her mother, and looked at him, her eyes wide with apprehension, the Englishman straightened in his saddle and completed his salute.

"Is this Mrs. Uys?" he asked again of the girl.

"Yes, sir," she answered, "my mother."

"I have a very hard task before me," he continued, looking fixedly at her. "But I have my orders, and must obey them. I was sent here to burn your house and buildings."

Bettie turned white. "Why?" she asked, trembling. "We are nothing but women and children here. What have we done? What shall we do?"

"Bettie!" cried her mother, frightened at her expression. "What is it? Tell me what he is saying."

"I am very sorry," continued the Englishman, "but I have my orders. But I will leave one of the buildings standing for you."

"Oh, he is going to burn our house, our *home* down, mamma!" said Bettie, hurriedly. "But why?" she cried, turning again to the sudden persecutor. "What have we done to deserve this? Do you English fight women and children, like cowards?" she demanded bitterly.

The officer flushed, and took a paper from his belt. "You are accused of having harboured the Boer Commandant Uys, for one thing," he answered; "and I have already told you I am not here for my own pleasure. I am under orders."

"Harboured Commandant Uys!" repeated Bettie, breathlessly. "He is my own father! Why, this is his own home! Where else should he go or stay? He has not been here for three months, nevertheless."

She turned rapidly to her mother, and told her what had been said, what the accusation against them was. Mrs. Uys drew herself up, letting Gert slip to the floor.

"Do they mean it actually, Bettie? I cannot believe it!" she said.

"Mean it? Indeed, they do! That is what the dogs are here for!" cried Bettie, furiously. "He has our crimes written on that paper!"

"Very well," answered her mother, slowly and coldly, "tell the Englishman from me that, if his general thinks to prevent me from taking in and sheltering my husband in my, in *our* own house, he will *have* to burn it. He is right about that. For I should do it a thousand times more if the dear Lord please to spare him. Tell him that just as I say it. And tell him that we will go away as prisoners or as homeless wanderers into the veldt, but we do not do it of our own free will. He must take us or drive us!"

With quivering lips but with flashing eyes, Bettie delivered her mother's speech in English; and she added something on her own account.

The Englishman flushed again, and was silent for a moment. Then he looked at Bettie once more.

"I will do just one thing for you: that is all I can do. You may have twenty-four

hours to get together what you may need or wish to save in one of your own wagons. To-morrow I shall be compelled to obey my orders, destroy the place and take you to Ermelo to be sent on to the concentration camp at Volksrust. Good-night." And he turned and rode away, followed by the squad he had brought on his heartless errand.

Bettie broke into great sobs, and fell on her knees on the threshold, her face against her mother's knees. Mrs. Uys was astonished at the abrupt departure of those who had, the minute before, threatened to burn her home under her very eyes. She was relieved.

"Don't weep, dear Bettie. There is no need. You are too nervous. You see it was all a joke. I knew well that even Englishmen couldn't do so cruel a thing as that would be."

Bettie lifted a white face. "Oh, God," she cried, "it is much worse than you think, dear mamma. It is no joke, but deadliest earnest. He but gives to-night to pack a few things,—a last night in our dear home. Oh, what will poor father say or think when he comes back

the next time?" And she burst into a fresh paroxysm of tears.

Her mother, startled, tried to raise her.

"What do you mean, Bettie,—what do you mean? Tell me at once!"

Little Gert, who had listened to as much as he could understand in a horrified silence, commenced to choke deeply at the thought of his father's home-coming as his sister pictured it. Bettie began to control herself. She managed to tell her mother what fate hung over them, what was to befall on the morrow.

Mrs. Uys listened quietly to the end. Then she shook Gertie, and spoke to him sharply. "Gertie! Gert! Stop crying, and go and find your brother and Maliwe. At once! We have not a moment to lose!"

The boy stopped his tears, and went back into the house, the man of the family again.

"What are you going to do, mamma?" asked Bettie.

"Do? I am not going to let that cursed Englishman burn our home and take us to the concentration camp! We should all die

there in a month, if only of their dreadful food. We are going to leave now, as soon as Gert and Maliwe can inspan a team of oxen. By morning we shall be far in the mountains where they cannot find us. We will take our stock. And the place will be gone! *I* will set fire to it myself, and the good God and your father will forgive me. At least the English shall not have the wicked pleasure of destroying the property and homes of helpless women. Whatever we lose, daughter, our heavenly Father will be with us still. We will trust in Him. Maliwe," she continued, as the old Kaffir came before her, "inspan the oxen. We are going to trek as we did forty years ago. Take what stock you can, and a couple of horses. Be quick!"

The sun had not swung west an hour before the unhappy women had made their bitter choice from out of all they loved, before it was stowed (with how many tears!) in the great canvas-covered wagon brought forth after years of solemn reminiscence in the barn to resume, in behalf of a new generation, its an-

cient occupation of fleeing before the oppressor. The wagon waited beyond the garden hedge, Gert holding three horses, his mother's, his sister's, one for himself. His brother was already half a mile on his way toward the haven of the hills, driving the selected stock slowly before him. The two women stood with streaming eyes in front of the stoep of their beloved Blaauwkop, neither of them sure of the entire purpose that held her there.

"Mamma," said Bettie, timidly, "don't do it yourself, don't burn our home. I can't bear it! Besides, if the English see the smoke, they will certainly come and catch us."

"No, Bettie, do not grieve. I cannot do it. I will leave that great crime to them. I committed a sin when I even said I would do so. But God, remembering the provocation, will forgive me. Perhaps even,—who knows"—

Maliwe, who stood behind them waiting, interrupted her. "Here come those who will do it for you, mistress. Come, get into the wagon. They are already beyond the taaibosch, and they come running like an impi."

They turned. At the same moment Gert began to call a warning to them. Down the Ermelo road and over the slope came a hooting, singing, rolling, rushing crowd of Kaffirs, on foot and on horseback, their shouts and yells announcing as clearly their temper as their presence. As they reached the circle of kraals and buildings that constituted Blaauwkop, and commenced to spread fanlike in every direction where loot promised, the women reached their horses, and Gert and Maliwe helped them into their saddles. To think of controlling that noisy and inflamed mob of blacks was insanity; yet Gert had to seize the bridle from his mother's hand and pull her horse about before she sacrificed habit to sense and was willing to let them alone. Once headed in the right direction, a few wild slashes from his sjambok urged the horses of his mother and sister to furious speed. But the boy himself, upon looking around, wheeled, and rode back to help the faithful Maliwe with the slow oxen.

As he reached the wagon, smoke was pouring from the windows of the dwelling-house,

and some of the out-houses were already in flames. Clouds and snow-storms of feathers from the ripped and torn feather beds were whirling in the heated air above the buildings, and drifting south-east on the afternoon breeze. Frantic dancers, arrayed in women's clothes, in sheets, in table-cloths, in anything bright and bizarre, reeled in circles and leaped like shuttles about the fires. Half a dozen Kaffirs ran up to the wagon, and surrounded Gert.

"Ho, little baas," cried a drunken fellow whom he recognised as one of his father's old servants, "you have been good enough to bring me back a horse. Get off!" And he lifted him down, gently enough and with laughter, despite Gert's angry struggles and blows. But, before the thief could mount, a tall Kaffir in a policeman's uniform, whose little eyes, crimson with drink, blinked from a brutally swollen face, hurled him to one side and mounted the stolen horse himself.

"Stand aside, dog!" he howled. "I am a servant of the Queen. I, Jim Kondwana, am an Induna! Shall I walk, and thou ride?"

Gert was white with rage. The boy sprang to the pony's head, and seized the bridle close to the bit.

"Jou verdomde parmantig schepsel" (You infernal, insolent scoundrel), he cried, "get off that horse! It is *my* horse!"

The little beast, worried at the strange and uncertain rider, and frightened by so much excitement directly under his nose, reared, and nearly threw backward. As his fore feet came back to earth and let Gert, who had hung fast to the bridle, down again, the infuriated Kaffir raised his kerrie, and brought it savagely down on the boy's head. Gert fell to the ground as if struck by lightning. His skull was crushed like an egg-shell.

Maliwe's cry of horror and fright was echoed, strangely enough, by some of the other Kaffirs who stood about. The murderer himself looked down at his victim with the anger lost out of his face. Then he wheeled his foully won steed toward the burning house, the other wretches following, and Maliwe was left alone with the corpse.

The poor mother and sister, who had seen the tragedy from the point where they at last got their horses under control, galloped frantically back to meet the advancing and weeping Maliwe, who had laid the little body in the wagon.

What was or could have been home to them now?

They passed across the wide, the rolling plains toward the mountains, and evening swallowed them up,—them and their new grief.

But a half-hour after they had passed out of sight, a drunken Kaffir in a constable's uniform took a forgotten letter from his pocket, and waved it uncertainly in the air.

"Baas Uys,—Uys,—that was it,—Miss *Bettie* Uys, at Blaauwkop,—well, that is right. The English captain told me to leave it at the house. I do so, and I will tell him." And he deposited the paper in the glowing embers at his feet.

CHAPTER VII.

ALTHOUGH Pietermaritzburg, the capital of Natal, was never at any time within the zone of hostilities, it was guarded and garrisoned for the first year of the war as if it were at any time subject to attack. And, indeed, for the first six months no one could be sure that it was not. The Boers operated all over northern Natal until May; and the capital was but a scant fifty miles from the seacoast and from the all-important port of Durban, so long the aim and harbour of innumerable British troop-ships.

The jail-hospital and a large adjoining warehouse had been fitted up for the reception of the wounded Boer prisoners. These buildings, connected and surrounded by high stone walls, fronted on the main street of the town; but the entrances on this street were small, guarded by single sentries, and used chiefly for visitors. At the rear of the buildings was a large yard, or recreation ground, surrounded by ten-foot, smooth stone walls, topped with

broken glass, through which a single wide entrance had been cut, and closed by great iron gates swung on giant hinges. Through these gates the prisoners and wounded were marched or driven in ambulance wagons to their long—sometimes to their last—home.

The convalescent prisoners and those whose less serious wounds permitted were allowed to exercise in this yard twice a day, an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon. Those who had special permission were also allowed to receive visitors, under guard, in the reception-room of the hospital. The sun alone was under no surveillance but that of the clouds of heaven; and from ten to eleven in the morning and from three to four in the afternoon it held uninterrupted converse with the free veldt and mountain bred Boers in the yard, to whom its very light and touch were as benedictions from home.

It was seven weeks from the time of his arrival at Pietermaritzburg that Danie Linde first arose from his cot and tottered out into the blessed sunshine of the court, leaning heav-

ily on the shoulder of one of his fellow-prisoners and compatriots,—seven weeks of suffering and monotony and mental depression that had seemed like seven years of torture. In all that seven weeks he had neither seen nor heard, any more than he had felt, anything but pain and sorrow. He had been surrounded by misery and picketed by death. Men with whom he had interchanged no sounds but sighs, whose friendship he had won only by glances, whose sorrows and agonies he had sympathised with only through his own, had, one after one, murmured and grown silent and disappeared. But their cots were never empty. New sufferers had filled them, many to follow their predecessors on the same dark road. His own courage had given way under the strain, and he had prayed to follow also.

He was worn and thin and weak when he made his first appearance in the court on that bright morning in February. But, at the kindly touch of the sun he had not seen for so long, his hopelessness disappeared as if by magic. At the warning sound of the bell an

hour later he re-entered the building, and answered to his name with a smile upon his face. He began to live again.

The news of the war that reached the prisoners was unsatisfactory. It was all of English victories and Boer reverses. But he could easily account for that. It came from English sources and was filtered through prison walls. So he refused to believe it, and did his best to put his renewed heart into his fellows. As to Bettie, he longed to hear from her, to send her word. She was always in his thoughts. But at least she had heard of him, he was sure. His old antagonist, his new friend, Campbell, had promised to communicate with her and to let her know that he was a prisoner, but living. He could believe in Campbell. He was a gentleman, and, what was more, a man. He *did* believe in him.

"Yes," he said to himself, "there are some good Englishmen. My friend is one of them. He will keep his word."

His certainty that Bettie at least knew he was alive and safe and his friendship for and

belief in Campbell put him in a better humour with all his conquerors. He held long conversations, and not disagreeable ones, with the surgeon in charge of the hospital, to whom Campbell had recommended him by letter. He talked often and cheerfully with his guards, and soon became quite a favourite among them.

One day he was sitting on a sunny bench in the court, dreaming of home, of a possible escape, of the chance of being able to fight once more for his country, when a young English officer approached him.

"Adjutant Linde, is it?" he asked.

Danie rose. "That is my name," he said, wondering. For a second he felt guiltily as if the Englishman might have detected his thoughts in his face. But the officer relieved him by holding out his hand to him with a pleasant smile.

"I was told about you by my friend, Captain Campbell," he said, "and promised to come and see you when I got to Pietermaritzburg. Do you remember him?"

"Indeed, I do," replied Danie, gratefully. "I hope he is well?"

"He was when I saw him," returned the other. "It is on his account that I came to see you. I may be able to help you. Would you accept a parole if it were offered?"

Danie was embarrassed. "Why," he said, "I—I hadn't thought about one. I should have to think of the matter"—

"Now, now," broke in the other pleasantly, "you would be much wiser to do so. There is absolutely no chance of your escaping from Pietermaritzburg, even if you were free in the streets. Your capital has been taken, and your people have been driven up into the northern part of the Transvaal, where they are still foolishly carrying on a small guerilla warfare. You would have to cross hundreds of miles of country held by us to reach them. And I will tell you privately that you will never be exchanged. Our government is determined to keep every Boer captured until peace has been declared. You may very likely be sent to Saint Helena shortly."

"Even then," began Danie, uncertainly, "I don't know"—

"Furthermore," continued his interlocutor, persuasively, "it is an absolute certainty—and you know it as well as I do—that this war can only end in one way,—in the complete subjugation of the Transvaal and the Free State, and in their amalgamation into the British empire. Now, if you should choose to be sensible,—to help yourself and your country in the best possible way,—I can set you free and put you in the way of doing so. It is only necessary for you to say the word."

Danie was startled. "What do you mean?" he questioned.

The Englishman looked him hard in the eyes. "Would you accept an appointment in the Intelligence Department? We would put you in the Free State, where you would have nothing to do with your people"—

Danie straightened up to his full height, and his face grew hard and white. "Stop!" he cried. "Do I understand that you ask

me to become a traitor? To desert my people and serve you against them?"

"Don't use such harsh terms," said the other. "It is only"—

Danie interrupted him again. "Did Captain Campbell ask you to put this insulting proposition to me? Tell me that!" he thundered.

The Englishman shrugged his shoulders. "It is my own offer, made solely out of consideration for a protégé of my friend," he said coldly. "But I have no doubt that Captain Campbell would be very glad to see you show a little sense in the matter. However, that is your affair. If you prefer to rot here"—

"I *do* prefer to rot here!" cried the fiery Boer. "And I tell you now that, although I was at first weak enough to consider, though but for a moment, your offer of a parole, I have to thank you for bringing me back to myself. I refuse it under any and all circumstances. I scorn the offer as I scorn the man who made it. I had rather have you shoot me than make such an offer twice!"

"All right!" retorted the angry Briton. "I am sorry not to be able to oblige you in every particular. I wish you good-afternoon." And he turned on his heel, and walked off.

Hours, days, weeks, months, dragged wearily by. The prisoner began to be bothered with insomnia. Night after night he would lie in his cot and listen to the monotonous ticking of the great clock in the operating-room, the next to his own. Oh, how long the nights were! Staring into the darkness, he would try to resist the influences of sound by conjuring up scenes of home and of the camp. But neither his imagination nor the faint, hourly calls of the sentries around the walls, nor the moans of the sick in their deliriums, nor the soft rustle of the nurses' garments, the little clicking of their cups and pans, could drown or overcome that eternal, infernal tick, tick, tick, that grew and increased and beat like hammers upon his throbbing brain. Toward morning only would he fall into uneasy sleep, and even such dozing as his weary body finally secured was interrupted and unreal. He would start up

as if haunted by ghosts. The fright, the dizziness, would slowly disappear, and he would rub his eyes and realise his surroundings.

"Ach!" he would murmur, "how crazy I am! I am still a prisoner in Pietermaritzburg. The chains of my captivity hold me as tightly as ever."

Then the long-expected days would break after those interminable nights of dreams. And such days! But at least there was no unreality, no deceit, about them.

One morning he was standing near the barred window of the reception-room, where he was sometimes allowed to remain alone, when a late visitor entered with a basket of fruit. The sentry in the hall, whose tithe claim was always respected, grinned as he saluted.

Danie had invariably avoided the visitors to the prison as he would the pest. He never could quite free his mind of the idea that a prison, even a prison of war, was not quite the proper place for a man to be found; and, moreover, he was assured in his own mind that most of those who visited the prisoners

came but to sate an idle curiosity, of which he, at least, determined never to be the object. But this time he was fairly caught. He bit his lip and waited, still gazing rigidly out of the window.

The room was entered,—a momentary silence,—light steps approached him, halted behind him. He could but turn. He faced an embarrassed, blushing girl of eighteen, her eyes raised doubtfully to his, her lips quivering in an uncertain smile. Danie suddenly realised that he was scowling frightfully. He corrected his expression with such haste that —he felt himself—he went too far in the opposite direction.

The girl laughed frankly. "Ah! that is better, Mr. Linde," she said. "You don't look so much like a bear. You positively frightened me for a moment, and yet I only came to bring you something from people who would be your friends if you would let them."

"I—I did not expect visitors," he stammered. "I thought the usual hour for them had passed."

"It has," she answered him lightly. "But I saw your face at the window, and I wished to offer you some fruit that I had with me. I have never had the opportunity before."

"That is because I have never seen you before," said Danie, gallantly.

"That is not my fault," she answered. "I and my mother have been to see the poor prisoners, one or both of us, every day for months. We have seen you in the distance often, but you would not look at us."

"But how did you get in? Ah! your face would be a key to any door," he returned.

"Hush!" she said. "The sentries know me as well as one of their own prisoners, and passed me for a moment. But we are not supposed to have any conversation with the prisoners at all. The officer of the guard will be back in a minute, and I must go. You will let us see you again?"

"Indeed"—he began to protest; but the sentry stepped to the door, and she had slipped out and down the hall. He ran to the window, and watched her emerge into the street and

out of his sight. The rest of that day and the night were but waiting for the day to come.

The next morning at the visitors' hour he was waiting at the grating that separated the prisoners from their friends. The girl was there among the first, and greeted him with a bright smile. A few words, a bunch of grapes, and she was gone.

During the next two weeks Danie saw her every day, sometimes with her mother, sometimes alone. He learned that their name was Maritz, that the daughter's name was Martha, that they were Natal Boers of concealed but strong sympathy for the Republican cause. Under the influence of the friendship and kindness of the two women his days became brighter, his nights grew quieter. He thought much about Martha Maritz.

"Ah!" he said to himself, "blood is thicker than water, after all. I could not like her and her mother so much if they were English. But they are Boers, real Boers, even though they are Natalers and English subjects. How much she reminds me of my own

dear Bettie! and yet her hair is light, her eyes brown, and she is smaller." And, as he had done a thousand times before, he opened the little bracelet on his wrist, and contemplated the features of his betrothed long and earnestly. "O Bettie," he mused, "how quickly I should forget her, were you near me! and how little I can forget you under any circumstances!"

One bright morning early in May Martha Maritz entered the hall of the prison with the usual basket, and went up to the guard near the grating behind which the eager prisoners were crowded. The guard took the basket from her hands, and accepted smilingly his own parcel unopened.

The girl nodded and smiled at the prisoners, singling out Danie with her quick eyes, and said to the guard in English, and loud enough for the prisoners to hear,—

"The dozen oranges are for Mr. Linde, please." Then she turned toward the thronging prisoners behind their bars, and said rapidly, in Dutch, "Open carefully!"

The guard interposed suspiciously. "No talking to the prisoners, ma'am. You know that, Miss Maritz."

"All right, Sergeant," she said, smiling at him. "I'll try to remember. I only said good-morning to them. There is no harm in that, is there? The poor fellows don't hear it often."

She was gone. Danie took his oranges with trembling hands, and made his way to his cot. He looked them over in an apparently careless manner. He could see nothing. What could she have meant? The appealing eyes of fifty men were on him as he handled the rare fruit: he could not refuse to share with them; and yet— Ah! this one was slit a little. He pressed his thumb against the tiny and almost invisible hole in the golden fruit, and broke the skin. His thumb touched paper, his fingers drew it out under cover of his other hand. That was what he was after, no doubt; and with a riotous heart he tossed the other eleven oranges to his eager comrades. The tiny twist of paper he slipped unseen from the palm

of his hand into his pocket, to read, to investigate, when opportunity offered.

The opportunity came that afternoon in the yard. Seated on the very bench on which he had sat during his bitter interview with the English officer who had come to him from Campbell, and who had tried to tempt him to treachery,—he shuddered when he thought of it,—he unfolded the bit of tissue, and read its contents. The letter was as follows:—

Dear Mr. Linde,—It is not without a good deal of trepidation on both our accounts that I am trying to smuggle this into your hand. If you get it, it is well. If not, anything may happen. We—my mother and myself—feel deeply for our poor kinsmen in the Republics, and we would willingly do what we could for the cause. The hospital surgeon told me a few days ago that you are likely to be removed to Saint Helena at any time. We thought therefore that you should try to escape at once, if such a thing were possible; and now it seems to be. Last night we heard that more wounded are to be brought to the hospital to-morrow (Thursday); and a daring idea came to us,—daring for you, I mean.

The ambulances will be at the hospital about four o'clock to-morrow. If you can conceal yourself, for a few moments after the call, outside in the yard,—possibly get some one to answer to your name when the roll is called,—and can manage to slip into the first empty ambulance, you will stand a good chance of being carried outside of the walls before your escape is discovered. The ambulances will return at once to the station for more of the wounded, and you will have a *chance* to drop out while going through the streets. I will wait on the sidewalk about a block down, and behind some large trees close to the road, with a cloak and an officer's cap under my shawl. We will then go right to our house, where everything will be in readiness to further your escape. If you dare to make the attempt, let me know to-morrow morning by whistling a few bars of our national anthem when you see me. May God aid us! Burn or destroy this letter as soon as you have read it.

Your true friend,

MARTHA MARITZ.

By the time Danie had finished this epistle, the cold perspiration was running over his face. He rolled the thin tissue into a little ball between his palms, and clapped it to his mouth.

"Alla Magtie!" he said softly, "that girl should be a general! And this pill,—it is sweeter than all the sugar-coated ones the surgeon has been giving me for the last three months! Down it goes!" He swallowed it with alacrity. "Will I try her plan? I should think I would! I might as well go to Saint Helena for trying to escape as for not trying to. I will whistle the old Volkslied to-morrow so that she could hear it at home! But if I should be captured while with her or in her charge,—oh, the shame!" His joy changed suddenly to a horrible fear; and, closing his eyes and clasping his hands where he sat, Danie prayed, though silently, as he had never prayed before:—

"O God of my fathers, to Thee I appeal for courage, wisdom, and guidance. Thou hearest the oppressed even through prison walls, and even here Thy hand can reach and help me. Take Thou charge of me, O Lord, and I shall be safe. O heavenly Father, guard those who are exposing themselves to danger for my sake, so that no harm befall them. Amen!"

It was far into the night before his disturbed and tumultuous thoughts allowed him to sleep. Long before daylight he was awakened by a nurse who stumbled over an empty basin, causing a noise that, light as it was, brought Danie upright on his cot. He had been dreaming of Blaauwkop and of the days of old; he had been in Bettie's very presence, her happy smile shining on him, her happy hand in his. Oh, the recollection! He prepared himself for an hour of worry, of fear, of sleepless tossing; but soon he was dozing and dreaming again. And this time it was of the field, of the camp. He had accomplished his escape, he was back with his old commando. He and others were seated at a fire, relating their experiences of the day's fighting,—how Jan dodged when the shell nearly struck the stone behind which he was lying. "Alla Kragtie!" Jan replied, "but, when that old khaki chased you down in the flat there, how hollow you made your back! If Japie hadn't shot him, you would have died of fright before you reached the kopje you were making for!" "There come

the khakis now!" shouted another young burgher.

And Danie woke to find himself again upright, his heart beating so loudly that he thought for a while he was ill. So intoxicated was his mind with the prospect of freedom on which it dwelt that he remained sitting up in his cot until the grey dawn, breaking through the dark curtains of the night, bore the day that was to bring entire happiness or desperate grief,—freedom or deportation.

At nine o'clock, the usual hour for visitors, Danie was pressed against the bars that marked the prisoners' limit of intercourse. Prompt to the hour and true to her charitable custom, Martha Maritz appeared in the doorway with her well-known basket. Danie's eyes were fastened on hers from the moment she entered the hall; and, when she returned his compelling regard, he at once began to whistle the Volkslied, slowly and distinctly. The girl turned pale as death with excitement, but instantly the crimson blood mantled her cheeks, her

brow, her throat; and her flashing eyes told him how great her joy was at his acceptance of her plan. She went away earlier than usual, and Danie was left to pass the day with his thoughts and his plans. It still lacked seven long hours of the time set for the attempt.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE tortoise, Time, never seems to crawl more slowly than on occasions when those hares, men's hopes, awake to leave it behind them in leaps that express their scorn as well as their enthusiasm. Yet the little animals are always fortunate if finally permitted by fate to touch the goal in company with the slow but sure chelonian.

Before he went out into the yard for what he hoped would be his last hour of exercise there, the young Boer had made all his plans, selected from his few possessions spread upon his cot those which he intended to take with him,—his Bible, his tooth-brush, a pocket-knife, a cigarette box containing two needles, some short lengths of thread, and a few buttons. His other property, which amounted to quite a little for a man in his position, and included a number of old magazines and papers, he left behind him for the benefit of the men he had lived with for so long. How he—a prisoner who, when captured, had nothing on his per-

son but the clothes he wore—came by such a little stock of goods is not explained. But it is observable that man, no matter where or under what circumstances he may exist, collects about him in good time numberless waifs and strays of property, things he needs and things he does not need, just as the smallest, loneliest peak of rock that juts out of a solitary ocean will attract the flotsam and jetsam of the seas around, expanding itself at last by so much.

With the four articles of property described concealed about his rather ragged person, Danie stood anxiously looking at the sky above at half-past three on that fateful afternoon. Thick, black clouds had begun to tumble up from behind the Bothasbergen in the east, and their great wings were rapidly spreading darkly over the blue expanse that paled before them. The distant and constant rumble of heavy thunder, beating like waves against the rocks of the hills, he could already hear. Every now and then the faint reflection of still distant lightning could be seen on the

clouds overhead. One of the quick, fierce South African winter storms was about to sweep Pietermaritzburg. It might last for hours.

Danie was perhaps the only person in the town who thanked God with all his heart for the cold, black gloom. It was too late, he was sure, for such a storm to bring rain; and he counted much on the assistance that the black darkness was bound to afford him.

Suddenly—at about quarter to four—the sentry outside the great gates turned to the court, and, pressing his face against the bars, shouted to the sentry at the door of the hospital building.

"Ha-a-all right!" he called.

The other man turned at once, and the assembly bell sounded. The prisoners gathered about the door, and began to march in according to their usual custom, in line and as nearly in alphabetical order as possible; for this saved them time at the roll-call that was held as they entered. Their guards were apparently in great haste to get them in this

day; and, as Danie neared the door, he slipped out of the line without being observed. He dropped behind two large water-butts that stood close together and nearly against the wall of the building, ten feet from the door. He had made arrangements with one friend to fall back in the line and answer to the name of "Linde" when it should be called. He counted on the haste of the officer in charge to get the prisoners out of the way before the arrival of the ambulances. The chances were fair that he would not note the substitution.

Danie crouched and waited. A corporal of the prison guard came out of the door as soon as the last man was in, slammed and bolted it behind him, and walked across the court toward the gates, jingling the keys in his hand. Danie could see him clearly through the slight curving angle of space between the butts. He unlocked the gates, and stood aside. There was a rattle beyond not quite drowned by the clamorous thunder above, the outer sentries pushed the heavy gates open, and three ambulance wagons drove into and

across the court, and swung around so that their tails were opposite to the door of the hospital, which the corporal, leaving the outer gates open and running quickly across the court, speedily unlocked. The surgeon came to the door,—Danie could hear his voice,—and gave orders. The bearers, grouped about the backs of the wagons, began to lift out the stretchers and take them into the building. One man was left with the horses. Danie was swayed by a strong impulse, born of his fear of failure in his plan and fathered by the apparent opportunity open before him, to leap from his hiding-place and rush through the gates, trusting to his speed to get away from the guard at the horses' heads and the sentries at the entrance. He fortunately restrained himself until the bearers returned for another load of his poor compatriots, whose white faces he could see, whose groans and shrieks he could hear, as they were rudely lifted out and jostled by the tired and overworked attendants. One wounded man, whose face he never forgot, looked into his eyes through the crack between

the butts, and, half raising his head from the bloody pillow, pointed a shaking finger at him as he was being lifted from the wagon. But the attendants paid no attention to what they considered, if at all, the vagaries of a dying Boer; and Danie's horrible fright went for nothing.

Five times the bearers of these bloody burdens came and went. At last the supreme moment had arrived. The ambulances were empty, and in half a minute the attendants would be back and in their places, and the wagons would be through the gates and on their way for more loads of sorrow at the station.

Danie drew a long breath, and stole from his concealment to the ambulances. He climbed rapidly, but so softly as hardly to sway it, into the nearest of the three, and, dropping on the floor beneath the seat along the side, pulled over himself a loose blanket that was lying there. He had scarcely completed his action when he heard voices again, the hospital door slammed for the last time, a man

swung himself into the seat above Danie, and the three wagons started. As they rolled slowly through the court, he knew to each inch where he was. As he passed at last out of those gates he knew so well, they banged behind him,—the loud clang of iron *behind him!* It was the most cheerful sound he had heard since the Boer Krupps opened at Dundee.

They turned down the street, and the horses broke into a trot. He could tell from the motion. The man on the seat above him, already in a conversation with the driver,—which Danie could hear, smothered though he was in the blanket, but of which he could not make out the purport,—suddenly rose, and, from the movement, Danie judged that he was climbing into the seat with his comrade. The half-stifled Boer ventured to lift the corner of the blanket, and look out from his dark hiding-place. The coast was comparatively clear. The two men were on the front seat, their backs toward him. He edged, still beneath the blanket, to the open end of the ambulance, hung his feet over, wrapped the blanket about

his head, and fell as quietly as he could into the road. Dazed by the fall, he still managed to turn his head on the ground and look after the wagon he had so unceremoniously left. It had not slackened its pace. It was evident that the driver and the stretcher-bearer had had no idea of his presence and had not heard his fall. So far he was safe.

He rose rapidly, and, wrapping the blanket about his head and shoulders, ran to the shelter of the great trees that overhung the road. The thunder was crashing in long, loud peals; the intense darkness was made still blacker and more impenetrable by the blinding brilliancy of the flashes that lighted the world every other minute. He had no idea where he was, but instinctively took the opposite direction to that of his brief ride.

He had not gone twenty paces when he ran plump into somebody, and felt a pair of arms flung hastily around him. He twisted himself quickly to the left and partly out of their grip, raising his right hand for a blow at the same instant, when its descent was stopped in

mid-air by a soft voice that whispered: "Is this you, Mr. Linde? Is it really you?"

At that instant a light, preliminary flash of lightning opened up the long vista of the sidewalk to his eyes, and before him, looking up at his, he saw the white, frightened face of Martha Maritz. She recovered her balance, disturbed by the sudden shock of their meeting, and dropped her arms from about his waist.

"O my dear preserver," he exclaimed, "I have found you! I didn't think— Were you brave enough to come out in this dreadful storm for me?"

"Come, come quickly!" she breathed. "Here is your cloak, your hat. Give me the blanket you have. I will use it for a shawl. Come. We must go directly."

He took the garments she offered him, and donned them. Then he wrapped the blanket around her, and, taking her hand in his, let her lead him on. They passed quickly and in silence down a side street, then turned another corner.

"I am going to take you to the house of a friend," she said. "I am afraid our home might not be safe for you."

"Anywhere"—he began.

"My mother is there, too," she interrupted hurriedly; "and we have there everything you will need, except a horse,—clothes, razors, money, food. You must be off as soon as you can get ready. I *will not* have you caught and made a prisoner again in this dreadful town."

She almost dragged him into a little gateway and up a walk to the door of a cottage, set some distance back from the street. A knock, the door was opened,—some people stood there,—he was hurried inside, and the door was softly shut behind him. The light, the strangeness of the situation, embarrassed him. He replied to the introductions to Mrs. Maritz and her friends and received their congratulations with a whirling brain. When the first excitement was over and his mind had become clearer, calmer, he turned again to pour his thanks out at the feet of the girl who had risked so much to save him. She was gone.

An hour saw him washed, shaved, clothed, and fed. Mrs. Maritz had trimmed his long uncut hair with her own hands. He was standing by the window of the little parlour, clad in the field uniform of a British captain of cavalry, and looking tenderly at the likeness of Bettie in the bracelet on his arm, when he heard a little noise at his elbow. He turned. Martha Maritz was standing behind him, gazing at him with shining eyes. He held out his hands to her impulsively.

"Miss Maritz," he stammered, "I can say but little of what I feel for what you have risked and done for me. Words are too poor to express my feeling. But here,"—he raised his wrist and held the portrait before her,—"here is one who, when she meets you, will know how to speak adequately for us both."

Her hands seemed to turn suddenly cold in his. She withdrew them gently from his grasp, and motioned toward the portrait.

"Let me see it," she whispered. She looked long into the lovely eyes that stared at her from the miniature. Then she lowered her own.

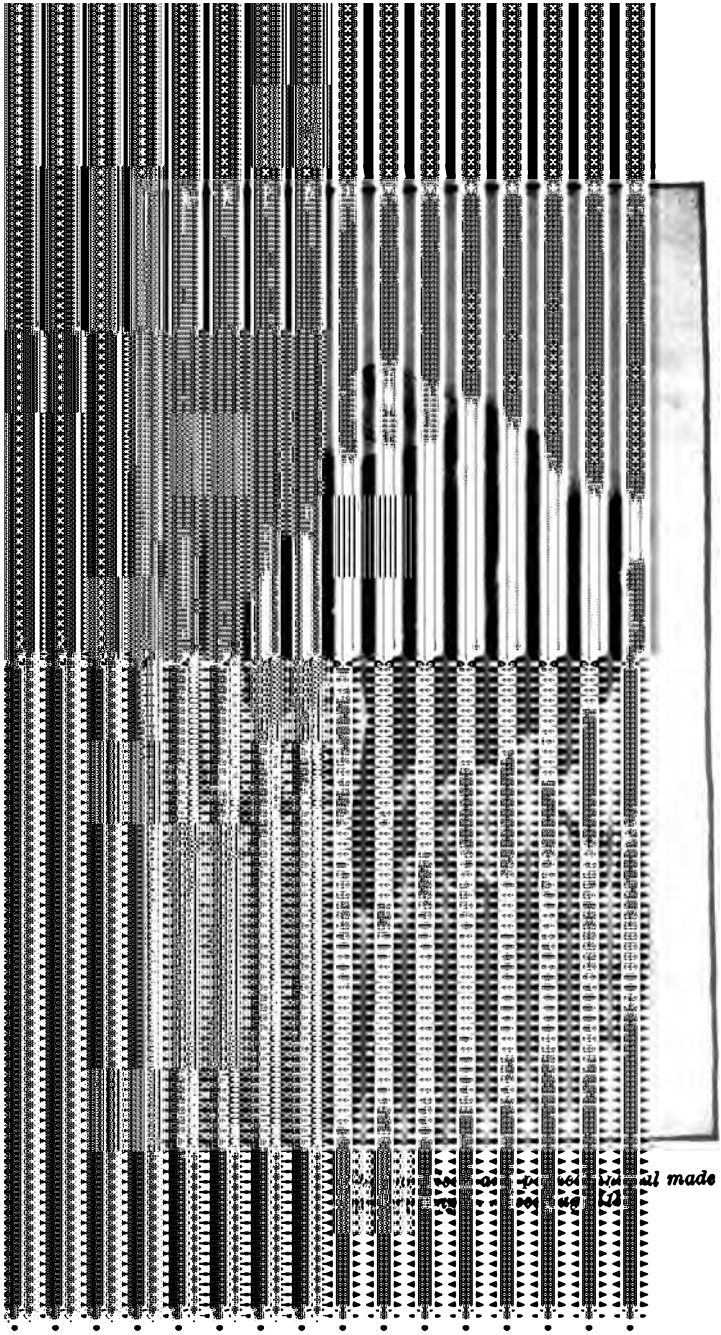
"Tell her I did it for her, although I did not know it," she said finally, looking bravely up at him. "And—and give her my love. Now," she continued, drawing away from him, "now you must go. I am very tired. God bless you and protect you. Good-bye."

He noticed that her face was very pale and that her hands were trembling, and he started anxiously toward her. But she waved him off, and walked quickly out of the room. As she passed through the door, Danie thought he heard a little noise, like a sob. But he could not be sure, and she ran up the stairs without looking back at him once.

With the deepest protestations of friendship and wishes for his good fortune, intermingled with much and varied advice and information, Mrs. Maritz conducted him to the door and let him go. On the sidewalk—on the verge of a dangerous and unknown future—he turned and gazed back at the house. Pressed to the glass of an upper window, he could dimly make out a small white face. He waved his hand to it in a last greeting, and went on.

CHAPTER IX.

THE darkness was still that of night when Danie Linde went out alone into a strange world under a strange disguise, leaving his friends behind him. The storm was raging and racing to the westward; and the eager Boer, obeying the instructions of his saviours, followed its course by the next cross street. He strode rapidly down Plough Street, and passed in front of the Royal Hotel without turning his eyes to the right or left. Once more in a darker quarter of the town, he quickened his pace as much as he could without breaking into a run undignified and unbefitting an English officer. He was nearing the outskirts. He had been told that he would have to make his exit through a regularly guarded gate, that the town was encompassed by pickets and by small camps, and by entanglements of barbed wire. A low house, set somewhat apart from the others about him and well lighted, stood across the road. Hitched to a rickety fence in front of it were half a dozen



horses. He glanced rapidly up and down the street. It seemed deserted.

Crossing into the dark shadows of a clump of trees that stood between him and the lighted windows, he peered carefully around the trunk of one of them, and looked into the house. It appeared to be a sort of tavern. At a round table in the centre of the bright room were seated a number of men,—officers, apparently. He watched them for a minute, and then stole cautiously to where the horses were grouped. Picking out the best as well as he could in the semi-darkness, he unhitched it, and led it quietly some paces away from the house. He stopped. There was no noise, no evident discovery of his theft by those within. He mounted, and rode off in the direction of the western exit. He found, as he had been told, that his way was barred. As he approached the gate, a sentry stepped out into the road and challenged him. Danie pulled up at once: the man's rifle was pointed at his breast.

"Well?" he asked.

Upon recognising the uniform of the rider, who now towered close over him, the sentry dropped his rifle into his right hand and partially opened the gate with his left, demanding at the same time,—

"Have you the countersign, sir?"

"Countersign?" asked Danie, with a beating heart. "Why, what time is it, my man?"

"Just after six, sir," replied the soldier. "At six we go on with the countersign."

Danie made up his mind in a hurry. There was nothing else to do but make a break for it.

"I hadn't thought it was so late," he answered. "Here is the word," and he leaned forward in his saddle. "Thank God, the fool didn't dismount me," he thought, "or I should have been stuck."

The man also leaned a little forward toward the officer, wondering in his own mind why his superior was so devilish particular about whispering what nobody was near enough to hear, if he had shouted it. At that instant the officer drove his spurs into the flanks of his steed, and the surprised and pained ani-

mal made a mighty leap through the air, bowling over the unfortunate sentry like a ninepin and landing himself and his rider ten feet beyond the gate.

Danie had covered a good two hundred yards and was out of sight in the darkness before the half-stunned sentry found his voice and his equilibrium. He heard through the sound of the wind rushing by his face a faint shout from the direction of the gate, and then a shot,—in a minute two or three more. Then all was silent except for the furious rush and thunder of his horse, to whom he put the spurs fiercely and recklessly from time to time. When he had covered, as he thought, two and a half or three miles on the straight road west, he pulled the poor brute down to a walk. The horse was indeed badly blown; and it occurred to his rider that, if he intended to depend on his mount for the rest of the night,—and he certainly would have to,—he must take as much care of him as possible. He stopped, dismounted, and laid his ear to the ground. He listened for a full minute: he could

hear nothing. As he rose, he remarked that the light seemed to have increased. And in fact the stars were out, and a moon was rising in the east. The storm that had been such a godsend to him—the devout Boer could not consider it otherwise—was well on its way to the great Drakensbergen; and his prayers, or rather that dear Martha's, had prevailed in every particular to his best advantage. With a great gratitude swelling in his heart, he turned his horse northward into the veldt, heading for the broad forest that he knew reached north as far as the Mooi River, thirty miles away, and lay fan-shaped between the two lines of railroad that ran toward Estcourt and toward Greytown, respectively. He had the map of central and northern Natal deeply graven in his mind. It was not for nothing that he had spent so many weary months in prison with men who had lived over, travelled over, fought over, the country that he now had to traverse. He knew that he would have to push hard forward to reach the concealment of the forest before day should

break, perhaps to betray him. So, once well in the veldt and at a long right angle to the road he had come, he dismounted again from his horse, loosened the girths, shifted the saddle, and rubbed the still heaving animal down as thoroughly as he could with long bunches of dry kwitch grass. Ten minutes of active treatment produced a very evident and beneficial effect on his four-legged companion, and Danie felt that he could safely put him to the task before them.

With no path, no track to follow, he rode onward with assurance, guided only by the ever friendly stars. The Drie Koning (Three Kings) and the Seven Stars—friends of old—gave him his direction. Now and then he rode up against a wire fence, or his pony brought up short before a donga (canyon), and he would have to waste time and strength in going around each to avoid it. But his little steed was strong and swift.

So absorbed was Danie in every detail of his dark ride, so full was his mind of the excitement of his escape, that the long night passed before

he dreamed it was half over. When the daylight broke, he saw the longed-for forest a mile or more to the left. He was in an open plain, and the mists of morning were rising to reveal him to any one who might be within sight as an instrument of fate. Urging his tired but willing mount to a more rapid pace, he entered the edge of the secure woods just as the sun rose. He rode into the pines for a short distance, and hitched his horse at the bottom of a little gully, whence he ran back to the edge of the woods and painfully climbed the tallest tree he could find, so that he could overlook the country of his approach for miles. The mounting sun lighted brightly a larger and larger expanse of veldt; but, save for the morning smoke rising from the kraals of a native village on the far horizon, it shone upon no life or signs of life that he could see. It was evident that he was not pursued as yet. After a full half-hour of discomfort and reassurance combined, he climbed as painfully down from his watch-tower, and made his way back to where he had left his companion.

He proceeded to cut an armful of grass, and, after watering and feeding the faithful animal, he off-saddled, and sat down on the ground to search the saddle-bags. To his delight he found three tins of forced rations and some dry biscuits, besides a field-flask nearly full of whiskey and a package of cigarettes. This provision, added to what had been put into his own pockets by Mrs. Maritz, would suffice him for several days under stress. "And, if I cannot raise more for myself when I need it," said he to himself, "then I am no true Boer, or there are no Kaffirs in this country!" And when he had, like a true friend and careful, seen both to the comfort of his horse and his inner man, he rolled under a bush and slept for hours the sleep of a little child.

Toward the middle of the afternoon he awoke. The remainder of the day was passed restlessly. He groomed and rubbed his horse until it looked as smooth and bright as a new toy, until its quivering muscles looked and felt fit to do the last night's journey twice over. He examined and unloaded and reloaded

his three revolvers—the pair he had found in the saddle-holsters and the one given him by the Maritzes—until he was afraid of wearing them out. He restowed his provisions about his own person to the most compact advantage. He climbed his tree again and again to take observations. At dusk he remounted with a sigh of relief, and resumed his flight.

The forest soon grew thinner, the trees stood farther and farther apart, and he seemed to be coming to an opening. He was more nervous than he had been before. Dim shapes of rocks, shadowy stumps of trees, rose suddenly and threateningly out of the gloom ahead to bar his passage. Unsubstantial faces seemed to peer at him from behind the trees that bordered his road. Mournful and invisible owls hooted at him from their hiding-places from time to time, yet in hushed tones, as if they feared to bring their night persecutors upon them. It was a great relief to Danie when after half an hour he emerged through the edges of the wood into the open veldt again. The sun was just disappearing, but so dark had been

the forest that he seemed to be emerging from night into day. A little distance ahead was a Kaffir kraal. He rode toward it, but as soon as he approached he saw that it was old and deserted, and overgrown with kwitch grass. He passed on. Riding up a little rise, he saw ahead of him another kraal, and the smoke rising dimly into the evening air showed that it was inhabited. Trusting in his disguise and in the extreme improbability of these forest-dwelling natives having heard of his escape, he resolved to visit them and make inquiries as to the country and its inhabitants. He might possibly hear of some friendly farmer who could help him.

Taking the bull by the horns, he rode in an open and careless manner straight across the veldt to the village, and halted by the thorn gate of the cattle kraal, where the Induna, or village chief, sat on a matjie of split cane, with his subjects grouped around him in a circle. A large earthen pot of oetjuala, or Kaffir beer, stood in the centre of the circle; and the natives, inflamed by the liquor, were all talking

and shouting at the top of their voices. At Danie's appearance they jumped up in surprise. Silent, they looked carefully about, according to their custom, to see if there were any more strangers, near or far. Then, throwing up one hand, they cried unanimously, "Baihetti N'Kosi!" (Salute, O King!) The Induna stepped forward.

"Where do you come from, Englishman?" he asked.

Danie answered him in the native tongue. "I come from Tolemie, and I am looking for a prisoner who escaped from us there. Have you seen such a man?"

"No," replied the head man, "no one has passed here. You are an officer. How is it that you travel unattended?"

"The horse of my servant fell and hurt himself, and he had to return to Tolemie," answered Danie. "But it is getting dark, and I am going to Greytown. Tell me the way, and if there are any homesteads near by, and who are the owners of them."

The Kaffir gave a long and detailed descrip-

tion of the road, the neighboring farms and their owners. Minutely he explained who were English sympathisers and which were friendly to the Boers. Then he called the abafasie, the women of the kraal, and ordered them to boil some eggs for the travelling Englishman. Danie's liberal payment was rewarded by a calabash of rich beer. The Kaffirs questioned him as to the state of the war, with unusual interest in the doings of their white overlords. But they did not hesitate to tell the sham British officer, much to his secret delight, that they were surprised that the English took so long about it,—that the Boers should by this time have all been killed.

Danie soon took his departure, and rode swiftly into the night. It had become quite dark. Making use of the information he had received and avoiding the advice, he steered his course directly north, and at midnight under a bright moon crossed the Mooi River by an easy ford. Stopping a few moments to rest and water his horse, he rode on without a halt or even a serious difficulty until the break-

ing day showed him the Tugela River, in swift and yellow flight toward the sea, confronting him with the dangers of its passage and of the daylight. A deep kloof, sparsely fringed and decked with wacht-een-bietje bushes and nooiensboomen, offered him the seclusion he desired until nightfall. Between sleeping and watching the Tugela Ferry, near which he found himself, he passed the day undisturbed and in comparative comfort.

He waited until darkness was complete before he ventured to cross the Tugela by the ford at the ferry, and he did not draw an even breath until he had left the road for the bush on the north bank and was well out of sight of the line of honest travel. His horse's condition was becoming a matter of great anxiety to him. The poor animal, its head hanging, its ears dropped almost as low as a dog's, refused longer to answer to the impatience of its rider, who himself, when he told himself the truth, was feeling faint both from hunger and weariness. But he was constrained to dismount and lead his horse, notwithstanding

his own languor. He kept up his spirits by continually estimating and recounting the miles that measured the distance between him and his prison, that lay between him and his country. He believed himself out of Natal proper and in Zululand, east of the Buffalo River. For was not the junction of the Mooi with the river of battles far to the eastward of where the Buffalo emptied its brighter waters gathered from the Transvaal mountains into the muddy Tugela? He was sure of it.

All that night he plodded along, as sore-footed as his horse, sparing himself no more than he did his unfortunate companion. He was, toward morning, so worried about the state of the poor beast that, had it been possible, he would have put the saddle on his own back and carried the horse. He laughed at the idea, but he sighed as he thought of what might happen if the brute should not recover some sort of condition. He watched its irregular heaving, its almost blindly stumbling steps, with a fear more selfish than compassion.

Where he was when the dawn broke, he could not guess. He only knew that he had held a generally northern course, that he had followed the friendly stars, and that he had kept moving. The day was spent mostly in worry and anxiety. He could not sleep. The unhappy horse would not eat. This ominous sign frightened Danie the more. He used every effort that suggested itself to his now unusually resourceful mind. He cast the tired animal, washed it, rubbed it, blew some of his precious whiskey into its red nostrils, all without apparent effect. It made no attempt to rise, it consistently refused to eat. Nevertheless, at dusk he dragged it desperately to its feet, and with the saddle on his own shoulders started on again, dragging the weary animal by the bridle behind him. A few hundred yards from the place where he had lain by that miserable day, he came to a road, and, crossing the road, he nearly ran into a small native hut of grass, so concealed by its shape, its material, and its color that it stood almost invisible from the highway.

Reckless of arousing either fear or suspicion, he called loudly at its low entrance. A solitary Kaffir came forth, and gazed stupidly at him, but with a little gleam in his narrow eyes to prove that he took in all he saw. Danie demanded arrogantly enough a description of his whereabouts and the condition of the countryside, and got it. He learned, to his horror, that he was near the little hamlet of Douglas in the Pomeroy district, many miles, as he knew, to the west of the Buffalo River and almost in the heart of northern Natal. He could barely conceal his disappointment and anger.

"Yes, baas," continued the Kaffir, watching him closely; "but, if you are lost and your horse is tired, you will be able to go to Baas Hockley's farm. He is a good Englishman, and is very fond of English soldiers. And he lives but six miles up the road and in the veldt to the left. He will be glad to see you."

Danie was desperate. He decided to go to Hockley's, and bluff it out. "Will you guide me there?" he demanded. "I will give you two shillings for the service."

The little Kaffir grinned, and threw his hands into the air.

"Go on, baas," he said. "You cannot miss it. It is a great kraal." And he disappeared behind the hut into the darkness.

The unhappy Boer lost his temper completely, and shouted curses after the black. But the only answer he got was a mocking laugh out of the night. He dragged on for another hopeless, painful mile, and then the poor horse stumbled and fell. When his master pulled him to his reluctant feet, he absolutely refused to take another step. Danie had to give it up. He dropped the reins and fell himself to the ground, where he wrapped himself in his cloak and slept.

He did not wake until bright daylight. For a moment he lay dreamily gazing up into a blue, unclouded sky. Then suddenly recollection returned to him, and he started up in a great fear and looked about him. Lo and behold! the horse was on his feet at a little distance, and cropping the short grass vigorously.

CHAPTER X.

THE sun was a good hour high when Danie, still leading his now partially recuperated steed, followed the half-obliterated road over a little randt, or rise, and saw lying in the valley before him the pretty farmstead he knew must be Hockley's. Beyond the kraals lay the chief farm buildings,—a large white house with a roof of glistening galvanized iron, a wagon-house, a stable. The cattle and the sheep were leaving the kraals for the veldt, moving slowly toward his right in a long, single line. As he approached, he could see the barn-yard fowls swarming about the kitchen door, at the opening of which stood an old woman in a pinafore, feeding them from a shaking pan. He could hear her high, cracked voice calling, "Kip, kip! Kip, kip!" to the stragglers, who were pitching greedily and hastily along the path that led from the kraals.

For a brief instant Danie hesitated. But he had to put a bold face on the matter. So he concealed all traces of his trepidation under

an air of complete assurance, and moved briskly on. As he appeared around the kraal wall, the old woman in the kitchen door saw him, and stopped her task to watch him with shaded eyes. A little Kaffir boy, who was engaged in separating the calves from the cows in their line of march, ran back when he saw the masodga (soldier), and cried out his approach to his mother, who was stamping mealies by the kraal gate. The old woman at the door dropped her pan, and screamed out to the boy,—

"Run, limb, and tell the old baas somebody is coming."

The little black fellow ran around to the front of the house, and shouted in broken English, mixed with Dutch and Zulu,—

"Ou baas! Here he come, een masodga!"

Danie was now so close upon the heels of his announcer that he could hear the answer.

"Well, let the masodga come. You baleka keta ama n'koujane" (run back and separate the calves).

Danie turned the corner, and stood in front of the house. The little Kaffir boy ran past

him, looking back at him over his shoulder, and, when he was at a safe distance, he called out to the soldier a native greeting, "Sakoebona indoda."

"Ewe, mfaan" (yes, boy), replied Danie, smiling as he halted in front of the stoep.

The master of the house was seated in a comfortable chair, with a lap full of papers, one of which he held open in his hand. Beside him on the floor lay a number of unopened letters, magazines, and other small packages; for the Kaffir runner had just brought in the mail of the last three weeks. He looked inquiringly over his spectacles at the new-comer.

"Good-morning, sir," said Danie, touching his hat.

The old gentleman took off his spectacles, put them carefully into a case, pushed his old "hard hitter" back on his otherwise scantily protected head, and rose slowly.

"Good-morning, good-morning," he replied, and advanced to the edge of the stoep, where he stopped in a characteristic English pose, looking down at the man before him.

"Good-morning," he repeated. "I can't ask you to dismount, as you have done so; but won't you off-saddle? Your horse looks all knocked up. You must have come a long distance, Captain—Major—? I don't know anything about these new-fangled mud-coloured uniforms and little buttoned straps instead of epaulettes. They used to have something decent in my time, sir, for a soldier and a gentleman to wear. I dare say these damned Boers would have been beaten out of the country by now if we had the old soldiers, the old Englishmen, the old red coats we used to have. You younger men are a degenerate lot, and your war is as bad as you are. What did you say your name was, sir?" He stopped to take a well-earned breath, and puffed silently with inflamed cheeks and eyes. The "degenerate lot" before him seized the opportunity.

"My name is Ainslee, Captain Ainslee of the Intelligence Staff; and I lost my way last night between Othello and Pomeroy. My moke is done, as you see; and I felt in need of a little hospitality myself," he said, smiling.

"I am on my way to the Melmoth district to inquire into some cases of treachery reported from there," he added.

"Come right up and sit down," said the old farmer, and roared for Jantjie, the stable boy.

Danie accepted the invitation, and left his horse standing. He hastened to tell his host that one of his objects was to get a fresh horse either by exchange or by purchase; "for," he explained, "you can see for yourself that I never could reach Pomeroy with this poor brute to-day, and I cannot wait over. I am on strict orders."

"All right, my boy," answered Mr. Hockley. "I shall be delighted to assist one of Her Majesty's officers in any way possible." And, as Jantjie came slowly up to the stoep, he ordered him to take Captain Ainslee's horse to the stable, off-saddle, bring the officer's saddle and effects back to the stoep, and with them the rooi schimmel (horse) for the officer to examine.

"I am a true subject of my Queen," he continued pompously, "and I should hesitate

at no sacrifice that would assist in quelling those damned rebels in the Republics. Excuse me," he said, turning again to his guest, "what did you say your name was, Captain?"

"Ainslee, sir," replied Danie.

"Ah! that's a good old English name. But you speak with an accent. How is that, may I ask?"

The embarrassed Boer answered as coolly as he could:—

"My father married a German lady, and he died when I was only six years old. Then I and my mother lived with her parents until I was sent to Cambridge, where I learned my English over again."

"I see, I see,—of course," said the old farmer. "Where were you born?"

Danie would have collapsed under this cross-examination, had he not in some measure prepared for it. Even now he was surprised at his powers of invention.

"I was born at Cedarville, near Kockstad, in Griqualand East."

"Ah! down near Pondoland," said his host.

"Yes," answered Danie, shortly. "How beautifully *up* your country is here. It looks as well as any I have seen anywhere in northern Natal."

The old Colonial smiled at the compliment, but was not to be turned from his subject.

"Yes, I do very well here, Captain. Let us see, Cedarville is the Dutch settlement, where old Adam Kock, the Griqua king, gave them land to his own detriment, isn't it?"

Danie looked at him suspiciously. "I believe so," he returned. Was he himself suspected? Did the old villain doubt him?

Hockley finally changed the subject himself. "Tell me just how the war is progressing, Captain. Better, isn't it, since Buller learned his lesson at the Tugela?"

Danie detailed as much of the latest English war news as he knew. He had had enough opportunity of gathering this news from English sources, even up to the very day of his escape. While listening to his companion, Mr. Hockley opened and glanced over the papers that he had not as yet read and what facts the

visitor and the papers had in common, the latter so thoroughly agreed with and substantiated that the young Boer was quite confirmed in his host's confidence as the English officer he represented himself to be.

The old woman of the kitchen door now joined the two men on the stoep. Without rising, Mr. Hockley pointed to her, and said: "Captain, this is my old vrouw. Mary, this is Captain Ainslee, with a tired horse and an empty stomach."

She mumbled something, and they shook hands. The old farmer rose.

"Breakfast is ready," he said, and, waving the "Captain" before him, followed his wife into the house.

The hungry Boer's satisfaction at the good food set before him was complete. His spirits rose many degrees before he came out of the house onto the stoep with his hearty host. But they fell as suddenly, as his host addressed him.

"Here is the horse, Captain. Now let's talk about the bargain."

Bargain! What did that mean? The horse was walked up and down in front of the stoep. It was an ordinary African pony, fourteen hands high, and in fair condition, but thin with age. The farmer called a general attention to its many "points" with a wave of his hand. Danie could see for himself they were many. Its hip-bones stuck out like those of a clothes-horse. Over its eyes were knobs so prominent that Danie remarked jocularly, from some points of view one might mistake the horse for a rhinoceros. He opened the animal's mouth to find teeth almost as long as his fingers. The brute must be as old as his master. But what choice had he?

"Well, Mr. Hockley," he said with a laugh, "if that is the best you can do, I will leave you my other horse, and take two pounds to boot."

The patriotic farmer regarded him coldly. "The horse is well worth twenty pounds," he said, "and I could not afford to take less for him, especially from the government," he added significantly. "I will keep your own

horse here for you as a favour until you can call or send for him. Otherwise you can take him with you."

Danie bit his lip. "Very well," he said finally, "I will give you an order on the provost-marshal at Pietermaritzburg for the amount. You can send the other horse to him as soon as it can travel."

"That's a difficult proposition," said Mr. Hockley, slowly, digging into the soil with the point of his boot. "I want twenty pounds for the horse, and to take an order is to take endless bother. It takes too much red tape and ceremony to get any money out of the government."

Danie hesitated no longer. He thought he saw a way out of his difficulties. He raised the saddle from the ground without a word and put it on the back of the twenty-pound horse, bridled it, and mounted it. Then he took a note-book out of his pocket and tapped it with his fingers.

"You know what the word 'commandeer' means, do you not, Mr. Hockley?" he said to

the astonished farmer. "It means a lot more bother and red tape than a simple order. Now a man of your loyalty ought not to hesitate for a moment between the two."

Mr. Hockley did not hesitate even the moment. He accepted, ungraciously enough, the order Danie willingly made out for him, and proceeded to give, according to the universal custom, a minute description of the roads both north and south, with particulars as to the farms and homesteads, the inhabitants and their sympathies.

Just as our hero was taking his departure, Mrs. Hockley ran out of the house with a slip of paper in her hand, and handed it to her husband. He glanced at it.

"Magtie! Captain," he cried, "stop, and listen to this!" And he laid his hand carelessly on the horse's nose while he read the slip aloud.

"It is from the *Umzinto Observer*," he said. "Listen. 'Last Friday night a Boer prisoner of war, a daring and important officer who was wounded and captured at the battle of Dundee, escaped in some mysterious manner from the

Prison Hospital at Pietermaritzburg. Hospital nurses and sentries are suspected, and have been put under arrest.'" Then followed a vivid description of the escaped prisoner, giving his name, and stating that he wore a full beard according to the usual Boer custom, and that his eyes and hair were brown.

"Magtie!" said the farmer again, "I almost thought for a minute I had the escaped prisoner in my hands, Captain. It would have gone hard with him, I tell you."

Danie's blue eyes snapped, but he laughed merrily. "Give me the slip, Mr. Hockley, or a copy of it. I may run across the man somewhere myself."

"Take it, take it," answered the old man, and thrust it into his hand. "But you will not get him," he continued sadly, "for the Natal Dutch are all unfaithful; and they will aid the man, so that he will get through into the Transvaal for certain. I know them!" His face flamed with anger, and he shook his fist heavily in the air.

Danie rode slowly off to the south-east in the direction of the road to Pomeroy; but, as soon

as he was well out of sight of the farm, he faced his horse northward, and followed the bridle-paths of the veldt that led in the general direction he was making for,—the direction of the Transvaal and his home.

Making vague and careful inquiries at a native village he came upon during the afternoon, he learned that some ten miles further up the road he was travelling lay the farm of a Mr. Van Rooyen, a Natal Boer and a suspected rebel. He found soon after this that the horse he had taken from Hockley was rapidly breaking down, and would not last long. So he decided to push on as fast as possible, and to try to reach the Van Rooyen farm before night. It was difficult work. He was entering among the foot-hills of the eastern Biggarsbergen. Riding at a canter over the more level ground and falling into a trot where it grew rougher, he managed to cover considerable country by the time the sun disappeared. He stopped at a small Kaffir kraal to ask his way and to ascertain the distance that yet intervened between him and his destination. But the headman

gave him an unsatisfactory answer to his question.

"Koedeh, noko akkukudeh kakalu," he answered cheerfully. "A long way off yet, but still not so very far."

Danie shook his head dubiously. This meant about six miles, more or less. Would his horse hold out? He cursed old Hockley heartily for the trick he had played on him; but he felt some satisfaction at the difficulty his patriotic host would encounter when he should present the order given him by "Captain F. H. Ainslee, Intelligence Department."

Handling his charger as gently as possible, he pushed energetically on. It was growing very dark: the sky was clouding up. Once he got caught in a moeras, or swamp, out of which he had hard work to extricate either himself or his steed. Near ten o'clock he rode into a garden fence, and, looking about him in surprise, saw that he was passing by the side of cultivated fields. Pulling his horse down to a walk, he rose in the stirrups and peered sharply through the darkness. Just ahead of him he

could make out a denser darkness looming against the gloom of the unlit heavens, and at that instant a dog barked, another broke in. He turned, and followed the sound. He passed a clump of trees, just distinguishable in the blackness, a stream or pond,—to judge from the low quacks and twitters of the disturbed ducks,—and suddenly brought up almost against the stoep of a large house. The dogs were now so fierce that he dared not dismount. While he was sitting perplexed in his saddle, the dogs doing a Hottentot reel around him, the front door opened, and a man with a great beard, who appeared fully seven feet tall, stepped out on the stoep, a lighted candle in his hand.

"Voetsek, Bull!" The dogs obeyed instantly, quieting down and withdrawing up the steps of the stoep to their master's side, where they sat down to await his further orders. The man shaded his eyes from the light he carried, and, looking sharply out into the darkness, called out in a deep voice, "Who is there?"

Danie dismounted, and walked half-way up the steps.

"I am in trouble, and my horse is tired. Are you Dirk Van Rooyen?" He spoke in English.

"I am Dirk Van Rooyen, sure enough," replied the man in the same language. "But what difference does it make to me whether or not your horse is tired?"

Danie credited the discourtesy to his uniform, and answered in Dutch.

"Oom Dirk, I am not what I seem to be, but a good Boer; and my name is Danie Linde. To tell the truth, I have escaped from Pietermaritzburg, and I ask your help as an Afrikander."

"Fasten your horse to the trellis, and come inside," said Van Rooyen, shortly. And he led the way into a front room, lighted two more candles, and pointed to a seat. He scrutinised Danie's appearance with manifest uncertainty. The dirty khaki uniform he wore, his sun-skinned nose and ears, the military saddle, which Van Rooyen's quick eyes had noted as soon as his strange visitor had dismounted, the horse itself, were all eloquent testimony against his words. Van Rooyen was deeply suspicious of his visitor's real character. The

stool-pigeon, trained to betray a man into the hands of the law, civil or military, was not an unknown bird in southern Africa at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the present.

"Well," said Mr. Van Rooyen, after a long pause, "you are an enigma. I am in the middle of the world with you."

"I can easily see that you doubt me, Oom Dirk," said Danie. "But I will tell you,—I can show you the wounds I received at Dundee in October of last year when I was captured." He threw open his tunic and shirt, and bared the lance-wound, just healed over. He then proceeded to tell all about his escape, and how he had fooled Mr. Hockley.

But Dirk Van Rooyen was still suspicious. "I know that the horse you are riding belongs to Hockley," he said, "but that is evidence that goes against you. We Natal Afrikanders, although British subjects, are all suspected. The English farmers, even the Kaffirs, get all their privileges,—they enjoy an uninterrupted postal communication,—while the Afrikander

letters are all censored, often destroyed. We are not allowed to receive newspapers or war news of any kind except when doctored from English sources. We are treated like rebels, though we are not rebels and do not intend to be. We are silent, and obey the laws. It is natural that I, as well as all other upright Afrikanders, should sympathise with our brothers in the Transvaal who are struggling for their freedom; for there is the bond of blood between us. But we have not rebelled. My riding horses—all but two—have been taken by the soldiers, and my forage, my slaughter oxen also. They have tried to trap me more than once, to get me to do something that would jail me, as has happened to so many Natal Boers. How am I to know that you are not after the same thing? I hear your story, I can see your wound; but that is not satisfactory."

"Now," said Danie, after thinking a minute, "kyk [look], Oom Dirk." He opened the bracelet on his wrist. "There are several of the Uys family living along the Sunday River, not far from you. This is a portrait of Miss Bettie

Uys, of Blaauwkop, in Ermelo. Perhaps you will recognise it. To her I was to have been married when the war broke out."

"The Uyses of Blaauwkop are related to us, and I know old Neef [Cousin] Dirk well; but his children I have not seen for years," answered Van Rooyen. "My son Jan visited them a year ago: he may know the person of whom that is the portrait. I will call him." And he left the room for that purpose.

Jan Van Rooyen followed his father back into the room. Taller than Danie, straight, strong, and of large build, and well dressed withal, he made the poor fugitive feel his unpleasant position keenly and bitterly as he looked him up and down and loosely shook hands with him.

"Is this the man who claims to be an escaped Boer prisoner, father?" asked Jan.

"Yes, boy. He says his name is Linde,—Danie Linde. He has a portrait to show you. Tell me who it is, if you know it."

Danie handed over the portrait with a burning face. Jan glanced sharply at him as he

took it from his hand. Then he bent his eyes to the portrait.

"Why, it is Bettie Uys, father," he said at once, "and this bracelet,—I remember seeing it on her arm." He jumped up, and held out both hands to Danie. "And Mr. Linde,—I have often heard the Uyses talk about him,—this is certainly he, father."

Dirk Van Rooyen elbowed his great offspring out of the way as a bull might push aside a yearling steer, and laid his enormous hands on Danie's shoulders.

"Dear God, my boy," he thundered, "this is too bad, too bad. I ought to have known you for a straight, decent Boer before I could see you well in the darkness; but I didn't. You will see why,—I told you how we have to look out in this cursed country. You,—Jan! Take the poor kerel [chap] up to your room, and give him a wash and a decent suit of clothes at once! Let the cursed thing he is wearing be thrown into the stove. Turn the horse loose, and let it run back to its English owner. It might betray poor Linde."

He was still talking in his sympathetic excitement when the young men left the room to fulfil his behests.

The rest of the family, consisting of a mother and two grown-up daughters, was at hand to receive Danie when he came down with Jan. He was once more dressed like a respectable Afrikander; and his clear blue eyes, his frankness of countenance and manner, did as much to put him on terms of intimate friendship with the single-hearted people who had taken him in as did his unhappy predicament and the deep sympathy it and his cause evoked from the charitable and hospitable ex-Boers.

With her own hands did Mrs. Van Rooyen prepare the hungry man a meal so ample that all of them could not together have eaten it; and the girls served him,—he could scarcely turn his head without causing a flutter such as when a piece of bread falls into the midst of a flock of doves.

Sleep was not thought of until three o'clock in the morning. And, when Danie finally went to bed in the room with Jan Van Rooyen, he

slept the sleep of the just and the very tired until nearly noon.

With the exception of an old half-caste Hottentot of long-approved faithfulness, the servants and Kaffirs of the Van Rooyen household were not informed of Danie's presence in the house. The Kaffirs of northern Natal were almost all pro-English in their sympathies, and the Afrikanders dared not trust them with any secrets relating to the Republics or the Republics' friends. So Danie stayed indoors and out of sight; and old Plaatje, to whom alone the secret had been confided, was set on watch to guard the inmates of the house against any unwelcome surprise.

It had been decided that Danie should start at sunset, and Jan was to accompany him some miles on his journey, and, when parting with him, to leave him some final directions as to how to get to the Nels farm, a homestead belonging to a relative of the Van Rooyens and a true Afrikander, situated high in the mountains just west of the Buffalo River. Once across this stream, the escaped prisoner would

be in comparative safety, and could make his way to the Vryheid district in the south-eastern Transvaal with little difficulty and in one stage.

The sun was disappearing below the western horizon. The family was gathered in a large front parlor to say good-bye and God-speed to the fugitive, when suddenly old Plaatje burst into the house, and cried abruptly:—

"Ou baas! By the big wagon-road from Baas Hockley's way I see some horsemen coming! They are riding hard, the dust is flying in clouds behind them! I think it is the nongai (police)."

Confusion reigned but for an instant. Van Rooyen's presence of mind dominated the rising terror immediately.

"Jan, take Danie at once into the loft, and conceal him near the ladder that runs down outside, so that he can escape there, if it is necessary. And all of you here keep perfectly calm. You, Plaatje, be very careful; for they will surely cross-question you."

When the horsemen—five policemen and two Kaffirs, armed to the teeth—raced into the

werf, there on the stoep sat old Van Rooyen, buried in clouds of smoke from his long Dutch pipe, looking the picture of calm content. The sergeant rode up to him, and, before the master of the house could even say good-evening, addressed him excitedly.

"Van Rooyen, last night an escaped Boer prisoner dressed in one of our uniforms came to this house with one of Mr. Hockley's horses. The horse was turned back. Where is the man? Produce him at once, or it will be the worse for you!"

Mr. Van Rooyen removed the long pipe from his mouth and blew a cloud of smoke into the air. "Really," he said, "I do not know what you are talking about."

The two Kaffirs had by this time been to the stables, and returned, reporting to the sergeant that both Van Rooyen's horses were there in their stalls. This seemed to ease the excited officer's mind a little.

"Will you produce the fugitive? Or shall we have to compel you?" he asked more quietly.

Van Rooyen answered: "It seems that you want a man from me. The only thing that will satisfy you that I haven't got him is to look for yourself: only I beg that in the search you don't turn everything hopelessly upside down." And he resumed his pipe.

The sergeant regarded him malevolently. Then he ordered his satellites to commence the search, and sat down himself on the stoep beside Van Rooyen.

Danie lay frightened and still, buried under the bundles of oat-hay in the loft. He could hear all that passed beneath him,—the men tumbling about the furniture, the slamming of doors, the ejaculations of disappointment that marked the progress of their search. Finally the sounds slackened, and at last ceased in the house. The last door slammed, the men trooped back to the sergeant one by one. Two,—three,—four,—and one Kaffir with hanging head,—the Van Rooyens drew great breaths of relief at the sight. All at once the other Kaffir appeared round the corner of the building, a saddle on his back. His face was wreathed in

evil smiles. The sergeant jumped up and advanced to meet him, wondering. A moment's colloquy ensued between the two, and the officer returned with the saddle to Van Rooyen, and with his finger pointed out the broad arrow, the government mark, on its flap.

"I arrest you in the name of the Queen—for high treason!" he cried in a voice that was the voice of triumph.

The game was up. Van Rooyen smiled bitterly, and turned his eyes upon Jan who stood in the hall just behind the door. Jan took his meaning, and slipped up the stairs unseen to the loft. Five words were enough. Danie slipped down the ladder in the gathering dusk, and crawled off into the black-wattle-tree and poplar bush behind the kraals with a great sadness in his heart, while Jan went noisily downstairs again and through the front of the house to give himself up, and to hold the attention of the captors until the important game was well away.

Darkness alone aided the unfortunate fugitive to make good his flight into the bush, for

the tumult caused by the searchers had brought all of the Kaffir servants out of their huts.

But he waited in the gathering gloom of the evening behind a little kopje two hundred yards from the house until he saw—and with what self-reproach!—his too kind friends, Dirk and Jan Van Rooyen, manacled and mounted in the midst of the jubilant group of police and blacks, and led off into the night to he could not guess what punishment, while the three miserable women were left weeping on the stoep of their lonely house.

CHAPTER XI.

ON the third afternoon from that on which the arrest of the Van Rooyens took place, a man, unkempt, unshorn, his skin and the ragged clothes through the rents of which it showed caked and stained with dirt and rain, lay quietly in the grass before the stoep of a farm-house high in the eastern Biggarsbergen. Seated on his haunches beside him, every now and then turning an attentive eye upon him, was a large black and white Boer farm-dog. The dog and the setting sun faced each other. The man lay sprawled partly between them, partly in the shadow of the dog. Once in a while the man moved an arm or a foot or laughed or groaned slightly. Whenever he did so, the dog laid back his ears and bared his teeth. But this meant nothing to the man.

He either chuckled again or babbled a few senseless words. Then the dog was puzzled. The sun seemed to set more slowly, as if reluctant to miss the end or explanation of the scene; but it finally disappeared. Within a

few minutes of its passing a man and a boy rode up to the front of the house, followed by two Kaffir servants, to whom they delivered their horses as they dismounted. The dog, urged by the impulse of habit, rose to run forward and greet them, but, remembering his charge in time, stood beckoning them with his tail and ears instead. Upon their approach the dog surrendered his office to them with manifestations both of conceit and relief; but the men, perhaps because of their astonishment at having so serious a trust so abruptly turned over to them, paid no attention to his blandishments. They bent over the stranger, and called to him. He responded only with an incoherent mutter and a smile. They grasped him by the shoulders, shook him, half raised him to his feet. He roused himself sufficiently to look past them with eyes that seemed to see clearly enough beyond the mountains, but to distinguish nothing within their range. They lifted him, and carried him into the house. Laid on the bed, he did not wake to remember or narrate his experiences for two whole days. Fi-

nally and fully come to himself, he saw, seated in two chairs at the foot of his bed, a man apparently of about forty years and a boy of about sixteen, each regarding him gravely over the smoking bowl of a long Dutch pipe.

As soon as he perceived that his guest's eyes were rationally open, the elder man removed the pipe from his mouth.

"What is your name, kerel?" he asked slowly.

Danie—for he it was—took in as much as he could of the situation before he replied. He sat up in the bed, and gazed cautiously at his questioner, around the room with its reassuring furniture and decorations, and out of the window at the familiar mountains. "My name is Linde,—Danie Linde," he answered boldly enough at last. "But where am I, and who are you?"

"My name is Willem Nels," responded the other, "and this is my farm."

Danie fell back on his pillow. The name recalled to his mind, as if its utterance had been the signal for the lifting of a curtain, all the events that had so far followed his escape from

Pietermaritzburg,—his first dash for freedom at the gates, his lonesome ride through the forest, the winning trick that he had played at the Hockley farm, and the misery that his presence and his appeal had brought down upon the faithful Van Rooyens. Even of the last three days he could recollect the more vivid moments, the most terrible impressions. He remembered how he had fought, and, as he thought, finally succumbed to his hunger and his thirst, his weariness and his fever; how foul faces had leered at him from behind trees and bushes; how mocking shadows and siren voices had tried to lure him from the path which alone he knew to be safe; how animated sticks and stones, over which he had stumbled again and again, had rolled or hobbled ludicrously, but remorselessly ahead after every fall, and lay in wait beyond the next turn to trip him once more; how the path itself, angry at his continually treading on it, had squirmed and twisted beneath his feet, and at times narrowed sharply into nothingness, just to betray him and his purposes; how he had shrieked at it, cursed it, fallen

on it, grappled with it tooth and nail, stealthily followed and found it among the bushes into which it had slipped to escape him; how the very mountains had at last conspired with rendings and roarings to obstruct his passage; how, giants as they were, they had shifted, changed places with each other, danced around him like phantoms of smoke in their efforts to prevent his penetration into their mysteries.

As he lay thinking of all these strange things, his heart beat harder, his face and his fingers began to twitch, and it was with difficulty that he brought his as yet but half-rebalanced mind back to a sane consideration of the duties and conditions that confronted him.

"Oom Willem," he said, raising himself once more to a sitting posture, "it was to your farm that I was coming, but how I got here I do not know. I am a Boer prisoner, escaped from Pietermaritzburg. All went well until I arrived at the farm of Dirk Van Rooyen, your relative, where they took me in with the greatest kindness. Jan was to accompany me part of the way to your place; but at the very hour set for

our departure the police came upon us, and, while I got safely off into the bush, the two Van Rooyens were arrested and taken away."

Danie, as in one sense the author of the Van Rooyens' misfortunes, looked doubtfully into the face of their relative his host, as he told the unpleasant story. But Willem Nels neither doubted nor chided him.

"That was not your fault, Danie," he said. "So let us not speak of it again. But we must get you started for the Transvaal as soon as possible. If you can ride by to-night, it will be best for you to do so."

Danie rose and dressed with much less feebleness than he anticipated, and after the evening meal announced himself as fit to resume his journey. It was planned that he should leave the Nels farm at about three in the morning, so as to cross the Buffalo River into Zululand by daybreak.

At the appointed hour he set forth, mounted on a strong Trippelaar pony, the son of his latest host acting as his guide through the passes to the river. When Danie at last parted from

his conductor, the great Buffalo River, broad and swollen with many rains, lay before him, the rising sun opposite just beginning to brighten the seething waters of the stream.

He hesitated a moment on the brink. He could see trunks of trees, thatched roofs of huts, sections of garden palings, now and then a drowned horse or cow, go floating past him southward to the sea. The river looked as dangerous as it did uninviting, yet he dared not delay. Behind him lay Natal, in the hands of his enemies. Before him just across the river lay Zululand, a kind of Debatable Land, fairly free from his foes, fairly close to his friends. Peering between the trunks that lined the flooded bank, he could see far to the north-east, across the level veldt beyond the river, the mountains that bordered his beloved Transvaal. It was from over their tops that the sun lighted up the world. The sight transported him with enthusiasm. He drove his spurs into the sides of the restive pony, and leaped between the trunks into deep water almost at a bound. The little animal, as astonished as his master

at finding himself in the current at so short notice, threw his head high up and snorted with fear. Danie slipped from his back into the cold water beside him, and, resting one hand on the pony's shoulders, spoke to him in a cheering voice, at the same time trying to keep his nose pointed diagonally across the river. The pony struck out manfully at first, but his best efforts could not keep him straight. The current gradually forced him round until, for all that the tired man beside him could do to prevent it, he was being carried tail first down the stream, sinking lower and lower into the water at every repetition of the frantic but ineffectual struggles that he made against his fate.

They were now in the middle of the river. Danie, though thoroughly exhausted with his own efforts, dared no longer rest any of his own weight upon the shoulders of the weary and agonised animal. So, striking out, he gained painfully a few yards up stream, and seized hold of a giant tree-trunk that was following them directly down. He had hoped first to relieve and then to assist the pony by offering him a

support instead of a burden; but the loss of the touch of his master's hand, light though it was, seemed to deprive the brute of what little he still possessed of hope or confidence either in man or nature. He lifted his head with a mournful scream, and sank without further struggling below the turgid waters. When he reappeared, it was with feet foremost.

Danie's situation was precarious. Helpless, supported by the piece of flotsam which, of itself secure, was nevertheless far too unstable for its passenger's comfort or even safety, he was being hurled southward down the river at a rate which would by sunset return him practically to the very gates of the prison from which he had escaped ten days before. He had been in the water two hours. He began to feel what he feared might be serious effects from the long cold bath. Cramps seized his legs, and, had he not been partially supported by a submerged branch as well as by the trunk across which his arm was thrown, he would have followed his horse into the Elysian fields that lay overflowed by the stream.

Frightened at this further indication of his danger, he managed to draw his legs out of the water one after the other, and, by careful balancing, to maintain a position on the tree-trunk which, although both difficult and undignified, was productive of a far greater degree of warmth and comfort than he had as yet enjoyed. But his spirits sank deeper and deeper as he watched to right and left the almost equally distant shores move northward in parallel procession. He knew he was too chilled, too weak, to swim to either, and that to turn his enormous bark out of the middle current was a task more impossible still. He was armed only with prayers, and with these he bombarded Heaven; but he had so little faith in the efficacy of such pleas for preservation, born of the exigencies of the moment, that he neither hoped nor expected any answer to their fervour. In fact, he kept his eyes lowered all the while and fixed upon the surging stream before him, out of which suddenly rose a point, a bulk, an island. Even before he reached it, he saw that the current of the river divided at its

upper end, and swept around the obstruction in wide curves to either side,—two tumbling, rock-broken streams of swirl and drift. Almost before he realised what was happening, his unstable craft struck a sunken snag, careened, and swung heavily around, sinking him to the middle in its uneven movement, and nearly causing him to lose his hold altogether. He clambered painfully up the new surface presented by the half-turned log, and clung to its wet excrescences with all the power that remained in his cramped and chilled fingers.

His course was now as rough and erratic as the chafed and swollen river, fuming at finding an obstacle to its hitherto unhampered progress, could well make it. He had continually to guard against being crushed by other trees sweeping, like his own, down the river, against losing his shaking grip when some great stone, rising raggedly out of the water, opposed with main force the passage of his unwieldy raft. But every blow, every interruption, every battle between these monsters of the river, was forcing him nearer to the left, the

eastern, the long-desired bank of the Buffalo. He was already counting the number of blows it would take, the number of twists and turns his craft would have to make, before he would be within safe swimming or even leaping distance of Zululand. With eager eyes he watched the space decrease. This time he would try it,—no, it was hardly possible,—but now—! A sudden and unexpected jar caught him too delicately balanced, and he fell headlong into the water from the stern of his impetuous craft.

Unnerved by the shock, he sank heavily, to rise again nearer to the shore, but just in time to receive in his side the full impact of a twenty-foot log plunging straight down stream. He was rolled over and driven a fathom across the water before he sank once more, gasping for breath. In accordance with the immemorial and perhaps significant custom of the drowning, he threw his hands above his head as he began to disappear beneath the water. As he did so, his right hand struck forcibly against some hard, rough object, his wrist was immediately caught as if in a vise, and he hung suspended by the

arm, for a moment half inanimate, his partly opened lips just washed by the passing river. With a few gasps he regained strength enough to blow his nose and mouth clear of the strangling water and to look upward. The broken and pointed end of a low stout branch overhanging the edge of the stream had passed between his arm and the precious bracelet that he wore, to intervene between him and death at the last moment.

With a fierce effort, Danie managed to raise himself so as to seize the branch with his left hand and drag himself painfully to the shore, where he fell, saved, but utterly exhausted.

CHAPTER XII.

FOR a long time the half-drowned man lay where he had fallen. By afternoon, and when the wind and the sun had thoroughly dried and warmed him, he recovered sufficient energy to drag himself to a place of concealment amid some near-by bushes, where he intended to remain until darkness fell. Toward sundown he was aroused by a sound of clumsy crashing through the underbrush. A little Kaffir boy was driving a dozen lumbering oxen to water at the edge of the river. In his hand the boy carried a small pail, which Danie knew must contain food of some sort for the driver's evening meal. The very sight of it awakened a wolf's hunger within him, and he puzzled his brain with plots for getting hold of it. He did not wish to make use of a violence that might, for all he knew, stir up a now unsuspecting section of this new country against its author. Nor did he wish to betray even his presence, if it were in any way possible to make a success of the seizure without doing so. He half rose

to his feet, and carefully noted the position of the animals as they lined up at the water's brink. Then, dropping to his hands and knees again, he stole cautiously through the bush toward the centre of the herd. In a few moments, by means of little sounds and movements known to his old experience, he had the herd uneasy. They separated farther and farther, until the boy, astonished and disconcerted, slipped from the log on which he had been seated, and ran to and along the river-bank, with shrill screams and objurgations. He left his pail behind him. As soon as his back was well turned and he was thoroughly engaged in the task of collecting his scattered beasts, some of which were already in full flight, Danie issued from his hiding-place, and fell upon the enemy's depot of stores and provisions. Completing his successful raid, he wormed his way back to a safer place of concealment deeper in the bush. From this new lair he had the early satisfaction of seeing the frightened Kaffir hasten his reherded cattle eastward, casting timid glances back over his shoulder.

When the darkness was complete, Danie came out from his concealment, and started east in the direction taken by the Kaffir and the oxen. He reasoned that by following their course he would soonest come upon a village, either white or native, where he could adjust his bearings, and, perhaps, even steal a horse. His heart was beating high. He felt sure that he was now within striking distance of the Transvaal, that one lucky day's riding, if he could secure the necessary means of transportation, would place him once more on its beloved soil. His hopes, his expectations swelled; his feet grew wings. The increasing certainty in his mind of reaching home without further delay or hindrance so fed his arrogance and conceit that he felt rather relieved than alarmed when he saw before him about midnight the fires of a small camp. He observed it for some little time to assure himself of its character and peacefulness. It was evidently English: it appeared substantially unguarded. He could make out the dim forms of one or two slow sentries patrolling outside the range

of the fire-lights. But the attitude of the whole encampment seemed to be one of unsuspecting confidence in the protection of the night.

A little to the left Danie could see against the star-lit sky-line a number of horses standing sleepily about on the veldt. Here was his opportunity. He stole cautiously around them in a wide circle until they stood between him and the camp. Then he rose to his feet, and walked carelessly in among them. He could see that some of them were knee-haltered and that the rest were hoppled. Disturbing them as little as possible, so as not to attract the attention of the camp, he attempted to capture first one and then another of the knee-haltered animals, selecting the best among them. But he soon found that they too successfully eluded him, and that he was in danger of causing a commotion that might easily be marked by the sentries. Fearing to delay any longer in his purpose, he seized the most attractive of the hoppled horses at hand, and led it out of the herd and away from the camp into the open veldt. Placing the rope which had hoppled it

between its jaws to serve as a bridle, he leaped to its bare back, looked up at the guiding stars, and started off at full speed in the direction of the Umvolosi River, a stream that marked the line of separation between the free soil of the Transvaal and the English-ridden territory of Zululand.

The country he was now traversing, known as the "Reserve," had once been a portion of the little Republic of Vryheid,—itself later incorporated into the Transvaal,—but the English had laid violent hands upon it, and it was now again a part of the British-protected Zululand. Its population of English settlers and native squatters, although eminently unfriendly to the Boers, was thin and widely scattered, so that Danie felt comparatively secure from unpleasant interruptions on his northward ride. Yet, when the morning broke, he could not help feeling somewhat disturbed at the openness of the country about him, which seemed to offer little or no opportunity for concealment during the day. The almost level plain, in the centre of which he found him-

self, stretched in every direction to the circumference of the horizon, with nothing to break the monotony of its surface but a few clumps of thorn bushes and some low, flat koppies, their grey, uncovered, stony ridges running east and west in parallel lines, far apart. He rode on for several miles with growing uneasiness. The grass-covered stretches of the lower veldt glistened brightly green in the sunlight, the dew hanging in pearls upon the long blades. The South African birds—the kalkoentjes, syesies, and wild canaries—were singing their matins in the air about him. From one or two distant and as yet unseen kraals he could hear through the clear air the strident morning greetings of the lords of the barn-yard, doing their best to announce the coming of day to all creation. The presence in the veldt of the strange and early rider was observed, if not welcomed, by the little dwellers in the bush and grass, who stared at him in surprise from their coverts as he passed. Squirrels chattered angrily at him, partridges whirred like animated snare-drums from beneath his startled horse's

feet, pheasants and guinea fowl, or pullmentater, fluttered aside from his path.

But he had eyes only for sources of possible danger. To his left he could make out the line of the river he had crossed with so much risk and hardship the day before. Its dark fringe of trees, the darker line of hills beyond it, seemed still to menace him; and it was in this direction that he first turned his head as he mounted the long, stony randt that lay in front of him. The air was clear and calm, and he neither saw nor heard any sight or sound of danger from the west. But his horse's gaze was turned in the opposite direction, his ears were erect, and his nostrils flaring. Danie looked suspiciously about for the cause of this uneasy interest. To his right, a mile beyond the edge of the randt, lay a small military camp, its regular rows of white tents glistening in the morning sunshine. He instantly jerked his horse backward over the rise and out of sight of the camp; but, looking around at the same time, he saw to his horror that this movement would not avail him. Already across the

rise, and circling slowly around him with the evident intention of cutting off his retreat, were two mounted troopers. There was but one chance, and he had but one hope,—to distance them. His horse, a clean-limbed English animal, was comparatively fresh and full of spirit notwithstanding his all-night's work. Danie bent low over his neck, and drove his rusty spurs into his steed's ungirthed sides. The horse responded with a snort and a great bound that landed them clean across the ridge, and they were off at a mad run down the northern side of the randt and in full sight of the camp.

The two troopers put speed to their wiry Basuto ponies the instant Danie disappeared from their view, and, reaching the ridge hardly a minute after him, opened fire on the fugitive while still on the run. The chase was seen or the shots heard at the camp. Looking back over his shoulder, Danie saw several more mounted men riding out from its precincts at a gallop to join in the chase. But these were still a mile away,—a disadvantage of distance he felt sure they would not be able to overcome,—

while over his two immediate pursuers—who were now halting, and sometimes dismounting to take futile pot-shots at him—he had the great advantage of lightness of equipment and superiority in horseflesh. He could see their bullets striking in the sand about him, and at times he heard them whistle uncomfortably near; but at the end of two miles he was practically out of their range. When he had covered three, they had given up the chase. He feared that the country might be roused around him, and he dared not slacken his speed for any length of time. Drawing rein only when it was absolutely necessary to breathe his now badly blown animal, he managed by mid-day to put twenty miles between himself and the camp of his pursuers.

He was now in a rougher country, and the rolling hills were in many places thickly covered with trees and high-growing bushes. The rocky little gorges, or kloofs, offered him the most favourable opportunities for rest and concealment. Of the necessity, especially for the former, there was no doubt. His horse was

trembling in every limb; and Danie himself, now that the supreme excitement of the chase was over, fully realised that he had been eighteen hours on this last stage of his road, the last twelve of which had been spent on horseback, yet not in the saddle. Leading his tired animal, he picked his way down to the side of a little stream that flowed northward from the hills, at first half concealed between two overhanging and tree-grown walls of rock. In this secluded retreat, with food and water for his horse at hand, he spent the better part of three hours.

It was well toward the middle of the afternoon when he moved out on the open plain into which the little stream led him, and saw before him, some two or three miles ahead, a long dark line of fringing trees, which, he knew, must mark the course of the Umvolosi, and behind it, brilliant in the glow of the afternoon sun, the mountains of Vryheid. He was wild with joy as he saw his goal lying before him. He sang and shouted and wept. Even his horse caught the infection of his spirits, and

tripped gayly across the level veldt to the river-side as if he had done but four miles instead of forty since the preceding day.

Upon reaching the banks, Danie dismounted to make an inspection of the stream which separated him from his home. Notwithstanding his wild impatience to find himself once more on Transvaal soil, he had had enough of swimming wide and flooded rivers. The memory of his terrible experience of the day before recurred to him with double force as he gazed suspiciously on the waters of the quiet but deep stream before him. He decided to find a drift, or crossing, through which he could ford the Umvolosi with less danger than discomfort. He remounted, and moved slowly east along the course of the river, under the great kameelboomen that shaded its high banks. A mile down he came upon a large, open wagon-road leading through a deep cut in the bank directly into the water. He slipped down the cut to the road, headed his mount into the stream, and let the faithful beast splash his way across at his own gait. As he

neared the opposite bank, he could not contain his joy. He spurred his horse suddenly out of the water and into the cut with a great shout of happiness. The action saved his life. Just as his startled beast lifted forward and into the drift, there rose up on either side of the embankment some fifteen Zulu policemen, and a scattering volley rang out, the bullets cutting the edge of the water into spray. Seeing they had missed him, they dropped like so many apes into the road about him, cutting him off either from advance or retreat. As they swarmed about him in the road, each black fore finger pressing menacingly on a trigger, the white sergeant pushed up to his horse's head.

"Hands up!" he shouted. "The game is up!"

Danie snatched his revolver from his belt and dropped his body along his horse's neck, driving his spurs deep for the third time that day. The sergeant saw the movement, but too late.

"Dubula!" (Fire!) he cried.

The word was hardly out of his mouth before Danie's bullet was through his brain. At the same moment the black police fired at the Boer; but, circled around him as they were, they had held too high, fearful of killing or wounding each other. Danie burst unscathed over the body of the white man and through the choking Lee-Metford smoke; and, before the astonished and discomfited Zulus took in the situation, he was out of sight among the trees.

Already the mountains were towering above him, and, trusting to his instinct, he made directly for their high and secret enclosures through a long and narrow valley that showed at its far upper end but a bit of blue between the snow-covered peaks.

Although he firmly believed that the Zulus, chagrined at the loss of their leader and disgusted at the ease of his escape from their very midst, would refuse to follow him up, yet he did not fail to put as much of the border land as possible between himself and the place of their ambush. At the end of a scant two hours his horse absolutely refused to carry him farther.

Dismounting, Danie saw that there was no hope of the poor beast being able to resume the journey. He had been shot in the thigh during the fracas at the ford, and the loss of blood, added to the other hardships of that terrible day, had brought him to his end. With heartfelt regret, Danie left him where he fell, soon to be a prey to those unclean denizens of the upper deep, the great aasvogels, as yet mere specks in the sky, which had already hopefully noted the arrival of their victim and joyfully marked his fall.

Wearied to his very marrow, Danie kept doggedly on over the crest, where the little valley, now become a mere pass, began to drop on the northern slope. Here he found an old mountain trail, which, a mile below the top, began to show signs of recent use. He followed it cautiously down under a bright moon. It led him directly to a little valley homestead, still high among the hills. From the shadow of the nearest kraal he reconnoitred carefully. As far as he could see, the kraals and the stables were all empty: there were no signs of either

sheep or cattle anywhere. He crept nearer to the raw brick dwelling-house with the thatched grass roof, which glistened like silver in the moonlight. There were no fowl roosting in the old willow-tree beside the kitchen door, as would have been the case in time of peace and if all had been well with the dwellers on the farm.

Yet the house was evidently inhabited. The old-fashioned window-blinds were closed, and the doors—he tried them gently—were securely bolted. Gaining nothing but a negative knowledge from his investigations, he decided to knock for admission at the door. Indeed, hunger and exhaustion impelled him to the risk.

He tapped very softly at first, and got no answer. Again he made the attempt with the same result. It was not until he thundered heavily and in desperation that a response finally came. A feeble female voice called out to him from the inside, "Who is it?"

"Only a friend," he replied, "who seeks nothing but food and information, and who will do you no harm."

Then all was silent for a minute or two. At last a little girl, wrapped in a trailing shawl, timidly opened the door. Her small white face peered suspiciously up at the midnight intruder.

"Who lives here, my child?" asked Danie as he stepped into the doorway.

The thin candle in the child's hand threw his shadow in enormous bulk on the opposite wall, and as she attempted to reply her hand trembled so that he took the light from her with a reassuring smile.

"My grandmother, the old widow Swartz, lives here all alone, sir, except for me," she finally managed to make answer; "but she has been paralysed for years, and cannot get out of her bed."

She was still standing in front of him, apparently with the intention of preventing his further passage, when another voice called from within,—

"Child, bring the man in, and let me hear what he wants."

Conducted into the chamber which served both as parlor and bedroom for the old lady,

Danie told his whole story of escape in all its details, much to her interest and excitement. He ended with an earnest request for food and for information regarding the whereabouts of the Republican forces. The child was sent at once to ransack the poor, depleted larder for his benefit. The old lady gave him such knowledge of the state of the war in the Transvaal as she could.

"Oh, how sorry I feel for you, young man!" she answered volubly. "You have escaped from all these dangers and hardships to find your country in a terrible condition. All our farms have been devastated, the cattle killed or stolen, and the poor people taken away as prisoners by the brutal English. I was allowed to remain here with this child to help me because I was too ill to be moved; but all my stock was taken, and I was left with nothing but a small quantity of corn-meal, which was long ago exhausted. If my sons, who are now with Veldt-cornet Henderson and his men in the mountains near by, did not bring me food at night from time to time, we should starve."

The child now came back with a strip of dried biltong, cured in the sun without salt. This she handed to Danie, who took it apologetically.

"I would not take it," he said, "except that I am starving."

He was munching the dried biltong in deep content, but half listening to the old woman's prattle, when the tramp of horses was heard outside. He leaped to his feet and drew his revolver, blowing out the little oil lamp as he did so.

"If it is the rascally English, you must open the back door and run out into the spruit. There you will be safe," said the old lady. "But no, stay here. It is my son's voice."

In fact, a man's voice was calling from without. The little girl ran to let him in. He strode through the hall, followed by two companions, each with a rifle in his hand.

"Is all right, mother?" he began; but, as he saw Danie, "Who is this?" he cried.

The old woman, delighted at the opportunity, repeated the whole of Danie's story to her son

and his companions. Nor did she hesitate to fill out its blanks with heroic thoughts, if not deeds, or to embellish the hero's courage on all occasions until Danie blushed as he smiled.

At dawn on the day following that of his re-entrance into his beloved Transvaal, Danie left with his three new brothers-in-arms to join the Vryheid commando in the mountains, until he should find an opportunity of getting back to his own.

CHAPTER XIII.

SIX weeks had passed since the destruction of Blaauwkop. After they had crossed the northern mountains into the plains of Lydenburg, the two poor women found themselves not alone in their houseless, homeless wanderings.

Buller's columns were spreading north and west from the gate of their entrance into the Transvaal, like the fingers of a hand. The irresistible lines of English intersected and threaded the southern and central districts, leaving the country a burned and barren waste behind them as they pressed slowly on to join the western army of conquerors near the capital of the Republic. Before and between these columns, and in the midst of their ramifications, twisting and turning like frightened ants in a garden path trying frantically to escape the threatening ravages of the sweeper's broom, fled an unhoused army of Boer women and children. Those who straggled too far behind, those who were captured by the advancing col-

umns, those who surrendered, were sent back through the English lines under guard to the great concentration camps, the nearest of which lay at Volksrust, where the railroad entered Natal.

Sometimes these helpless fugitives would number hundreds, and their wagons aggregate a caravan. But at the approach of a column of the enemy or at the sound of the thunder of cannon among the hills these flights of frightened birds would lose their coherence, and separate into their component parts. At times the scattering would be complete; and for days together solitary wagons would proceed half aimlessly across the veldt or among the hills, to drift together a week later by some indefinite law of attraction of like for like.

Mrs. Uys and Bettie had grown unconsciously to love their wagon, just as they had been attached to the rooms in which they used to sleep. The grief and horror of Gert's death and the burning of their home still shadowed their hearts; but man, the most adaptable of all living creatures, turns dust over to dust in a

shorter time than he is ever willing to admit, and recentres his attention on the present and the future of the living. So did the two women, cheered by the childish and hardly clouded joy and excitement of the younger—now the only—boy, strengthened by the unswerving care and fidelity of old Maliwe, and prevented from brooding over their bereavement by the constant necessity for watchfulness and action, find a ruder solace and a styptic for their wounds in the open, hunted life they led upon the plains. Many a stormy night, when it was blowing and raining, did they and the old Kaffir struggle, sometimes for an hour or more, to get the sail-cloth covering firmly fixed tent-shape across the wagon, so that they and the child might sleep, if not in dry beds, at least in stable ones. Over many a hill and across many a river their wagon carried them safely, but only because they lent their own assistance energetically to the task, sometimes laid their own hands to the wheel.

Occasionally in their journeyings they came to houses that had not been utterly destroyed,

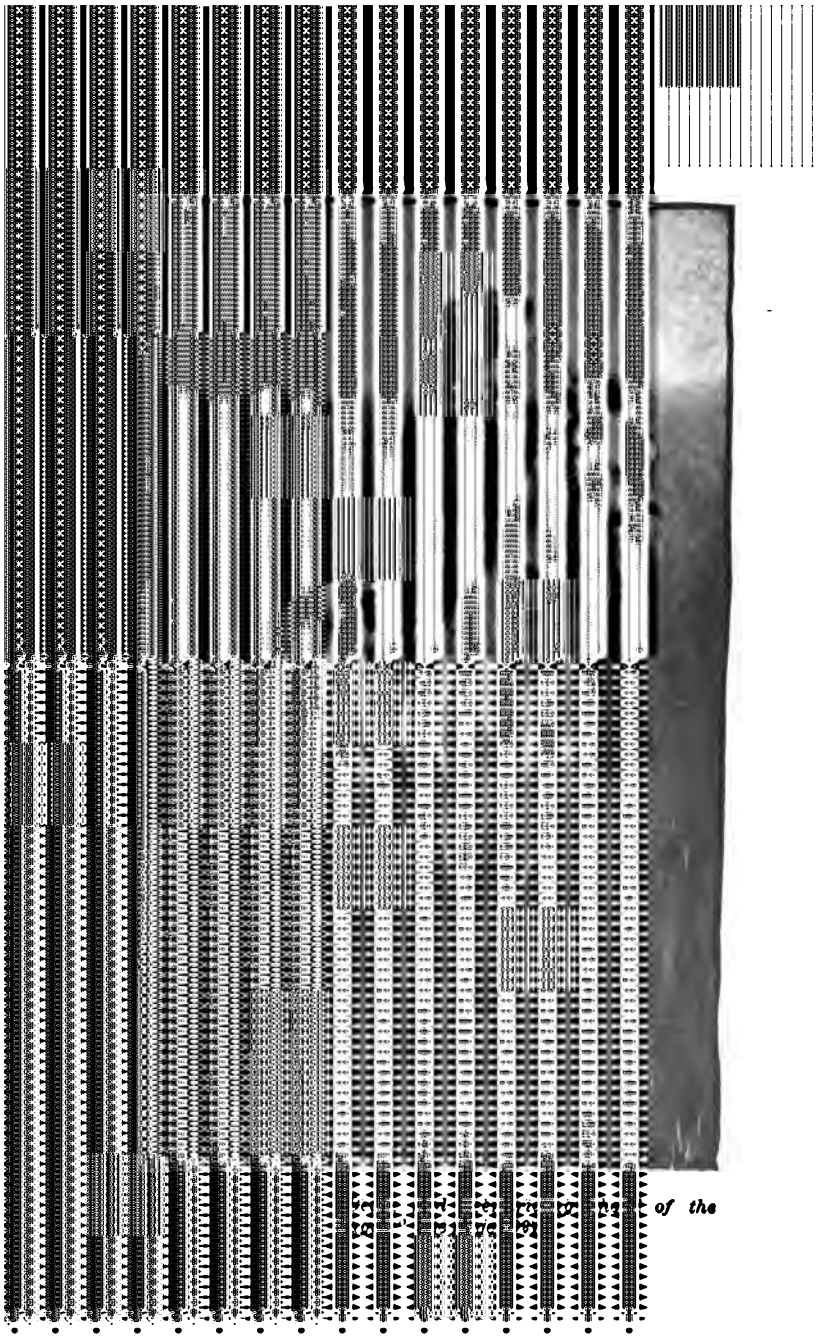
where, perhaps, one room, or even more, would still be under the shelter of the tipsy, fire-bent corrugated iron roof. There they would stop, and spend perhaps the heated part of one day, perhaps several days. But they always had to move on, sometimes in a numerous company, sometimes entirely alone. The roads and passes were stopped and held by English block-houses, as were the railroads; and only the veldt and the hills were free to these poor wanderers. Once they saw, far ahead in the path they were travelling, a great grey mass lying in the middle veldt. Upon approach, they saw that it was composed of thousands of dead sheep, killed in that spot by a passing English column. The poor animals had not been able to keep up with the march, and had been slaughtered, not wantonly, as might have been supposed from their appearance, but with the cruel and deliberate purpose of keeping them out of the hands of the starving Boers. They lay massed together as they had fallen, some shot, some stabbed or cut down, many with their heads completely severed by a sabre-cut.

Bettie, who had been riding ahead of the wagon, turned back with a chalk-like face and a swaying seat as she saw the horrible sight, and realised its meaning.

"O my God," she whispered shakily, "were not the men and the women and the children enough? Oh, those English! Have they got to kill every living thing in our poor country?"

Little Egbert cried himself sick at the sight, and for long refused to be consoled. Bettie and Maliwe had great difficulty in driving their oxen and the little stock that remained to them past this holocaust of thousands; for the smell of blood was thick in the air. Yet they could not turn back or even aside, for an advancing column of the enemy was not six hours behind them.

Not long after this they were enabled to stop for a few days' rest in a little camp made up of some of their fellow-fugitives. Mrs. Uys and Bettie made the most of the opportunity. Maliwe built them a little hut in the cool shade of some trees. At their feet flowed the beautiful Komati. It was a pleasant spot to stop in.



of the

In company with some of the other women they constructed a small oven of sticks and mud in which they baked bread. They even went so far as to make soap, of which they stood in great need. The few Kaffirs and the boys collected vogelsent. From the ashes of the burnt vogels the women managed to make a very good soap. The children spent the sunny days in searching for wild honey on the mountain side. The little company could have remained in this place with comfort as well as happiness, had it not been for the eternal fear of the khakis which hung over them. And this fear, unfortunately, was soon realised.

On the tenth day of the Uyses' sojourn in this little community a Kaffir boy came tearing into the camp from the hillside, with staring eyes and urgent voice.

"Inspan, missy, inspan!" he shouted to the first woman he met. "The khakis are on us. They are coming right over the hill!"

The words were hardly out of his mouth before two lines of dust-colored troopers appeared over the heights at either side of the entrance

to the valley. The confusion in the little camp was irremediable. The wagons were circled not far from the huts in a sort of kraal, in which the riding horses and few heads of stock were accustomed to be confined at night. The draught-oxen were grazing two miles away. Only the day before the weary little band of fugitives had received word from a near-by commando in the mountains that no English troops were within striking distance, or likely to be for a week to come. They were taken completely by surprise, and awaited their fate with hearts variously tuned to every note on the scale of misery and apprehension.

The hut which had been the home of the little Uys family for more than a week was the first to be encompassed in the net of the advancing skirmish line of suspicious English. Rifle in hand, these advanced cautiously, taking advantage of every stone and every bush that seemed to offer the protection of a partial concealment from the possible Boer marksmen. For the second time poor Bettie and her mother stood trembling in the doorway of all they

could call their own, watching the threatening approach of the men they now hated more bitterly than ever. A tall, long-legged officer, mounted on a ridiculously small pony, rode up before their hut, fixing an eye-glass in his eye, and seemingly unaware of the ludicrousness of his appearance. Had it not been for the shortness of his English stirrup-leathers, his feet would have almost touched the ground.

"Where are the Boers?" he asked as savagely as his lack of breath would allow.

Bettie answered in clear English: "Boers? If you mean men, not one has been here for days."

The officer turned and shouted an unintelligible order to his men, who moved more freely forward among the clustering women and into the huts.

"Where are the commandos?" he demanded again of Bettie, as fiercely as before.

The girl looked at him coldly. "We know nothing of any commandos," she said. "How should we? Your noble army has not only driven us away from our homes after destroying

them, but has hunted us over the veldt like wild beasts. We have gone so far, so many of us are sick, so many have died,"—her voice broke,—"that we do not know whether we shall ever again see the men we love, if, indeed, you have not killed them also."

The officer laughed in her face. "Very pretty, Miss Boer," he said; "but we happen to know better."

Bettie flushed with anger. "If those same men were here whom you pretend to be so anxious to find, you would not dare to call their women liars," she cried. She turned to her mother, and furiously repeated the insult which, she conceived, had been offered to her, together with the answer she had made, translating them both into Dutch.

History, even domestic history, has a habit of repeating itself sooner or later. Mrs. Uys was in the act of warning her daughter against the further irritation of an already excited enemy, when there was a stirring and a thumping behind her, and Egbert broke between the women, dragging an antiquated shot-gun half

as long again as himself. It had formed a useful part of the paraphernalia of their passage.

"Mother—zus' Bettie," he gasped, his face flaming from his ire and his exertion, "do not let the dirty khaki call you a liar. We will shoot him first." And he tried to raise the heavy gun to his shoulder.

The whole incident formed so close a parallel to the one which had taken place at Blaauwkop early in the afternoon of the day which had brought their first English persecutors and brave little Gertie's bloody death that the same chill of horror struck to the hearts of both women. Before the boy had lifted the muzzle of the piece clear of the ground, his mother had fallen upon him with a cry of agony and dashed it from his hands. Bettie, terrified at this and sick at the memory of the former scene, was leaning ashy white against the door post of the hut. The officer, a little startled, but beyond measure enraged at what he understood more from the pantomime than from the words, dismounted, or rather stepped aside from his meagre steed, and stooped in front of the group

in the doorway. With one hand he raised the rusty weapon from the ground, while with the back of the other he struck the boy, clasped helplessly against his mother's breast, a hard blow in the face. Then he turned, and called loudly for a non-commissioned officer. A corporal and four men came running up.

"Corporal, you will take this rifle and put it among my baggage as evidence of attempted assassination," he said, handing the man the gun and turning significant eyes full on the pallid girl before him. "Then you will return and definitely arrest these women, keeping them under special guard until they reach Volksrust, when you will see that they are placed in the common jail. The rest of the herd will go to the concentration camp." He enunciated every word distinctly and viciously, so that poor Bettie might not and did not miss one syllable of his meaning. Then he turned on his heel with a cruel smile, and left them.

Within an hour the mournful little procession was on its way southward to Volksrust. The Boer women dreaded the concentration camps

no less than did the men expatriation; and, as the line of creaking carts and mounted men threaded its way out of the valley and over the hills, there was hardly an eye among the women not too blind with tears to see, hardly a heart not too chilled with grief and fear to feel the bright sun that still shone overhead.

The long journey south through the wasted land was made over the roads and highways, now no longer forbidden and avoided paths to the captured refugees. The actual travelling was easier for most of them than it had been while they were crossing veldt and stream and hill. But they suffered more. They were no longer in their own wagons with what of their own comforts they had been fortunate enough to save. They were not grouped by families, but were herded like cattle into comfortless conveyances, drawn by stubborn, capricious, evil-tempered mules. In addition to the still acute and drear memories they had of the destruction of their various farms and homesteads, they could and did recall with almost as bitter tears their final capture, the ruthless burning and

pillaging of their late pitiful little halting-place on the Komati, and the brutal slaughter of such of their oxen and cattle as their captors chose not to carry along with them.

Privacy and seclusion began already to be things of the past. Bettie and her mother especially, under the orders of the officer in command of the column, were so closely guarded, so constantly watched, that their lives became greater burdens to them than either grief or the monotony of which their days for the most part consisted would otherwise have warranted. Frightened as they were at the future in store for them, they were nevertheless actually relieved when, at the end of two dusty, windy weeks, the tents and towers of Volksrust met their sight. But here the mother's heart was to suffer an additional pang. When the corporal who had them in his charge came, embarrassed and apologetic, to separate them from their fellow-prisoners as they were entering the town, he informed them that the boy, Egbert, would not be allowed to accompany them to the jail, but would have to go on to the concentration

camp with the rest of the prisoners. Poor Mrs. Uys raised her hands in frantic protest as Bettie translated the order through her sobs.

"My God," she cried, "am I to have no child left to care for? Is even my last little one to be sacrificed by the bloody oppressors? Were not my husband and my three grown sons—and God knows whether they are now dead or alive—enough of a sacrifice for my country, that they had to murder one of my little ones before my eyes, and now wish to tear my last chicken from me?" She could not see the boy for her tears as she strained her arms about him.

He was taken from her and led away.

"Mother, dear mother," wailed Bettie, sinking to the ground and clasping her mother's knees. "I am here, I shall be with you. Look at me, speak to me."

But the elder woman, a Niobe turned to stone, neither saw nor heard her; and she was taken to the jail heedless of her daughter's tears, deaf to her pleadings as to her comforting, her own eyes pitifully fixed in the direction of the camp.

UNDER THE VIERKLEUR

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

THE end of 1901 was in sight, and yet the end of the war was not. But in the eyes of England and, indeed, of those of the whole pitying world, with the solitary exceptions of the strangely partial and blinded little Dutch Republics, the ultimate fate of the latter was signed and sealed. England wondered how the truculent and rebellious Boers dared further —in fact, had dared at first—oppose her power. The world wondered how it was that so few and undisciplined battalions—so thin a second line of "embattled farmers"—could still hold in check the quarter of a million fighting men who had so long overflowed their country. The Boers, partly recovered from the deep dejection into which their early losses had thrown them, began timidly to wonder whether, after so prolonged and desperate a defence, fortune was not at last about to smile success upon them and their cause.

Indeed, the state of affairs, which should have been utterly discouraging to the Boers,

was in many ways as much so to the English. It was not the fate, the freedom of England which was at stake, nor the eventual success of British arms; but it was the reputation of these arms and of the nation they defended which was imperilled before the eyes of all Europe. And England knew it.

To conceal his own embarrassment and that of his government, His Excellency Baron Kitchener of Khartoum, G.C.B., K.C.M.G., General Commander-in-chief of His Majesty's forces in South Africa, High Commissioner of South Africa, and Administrator of the Transvaal, etc., issued on the 7th of August, 1901, a proclamation which was calculated at once to lay before the world the fulness and extent of England's dearly bought dominion, and to bring the stubborn and ignorant provinces to a realisation of the criminal hopelessness of further resistance. But, curiously enough, it appeared that this proclamation served still another turn.

"*Whereas*," stated Lord Kitchener," *the former Orange Free State and South African*

Republic are annexed to His Majesty's possessions;

("Not because you say so," answered the Boers, emphatically. "To annex us on paper does not convince us of our annexation.")

"*And whereas His Majesty's forces have now been for some considerable time in full possession of the Government seats of both the above-mentioned territories, with all their public offices and means of administration, as well as of the principal towns and the whole railway;*

("Of our public offices, yes," replied the Boers, "but not of our public officers.")

"*And whereas the great majority of burghers of the two late Republics (which number thirty-five thousand over and above those who have been killed in the war) are now prisoners of war, or have subjected themselves to His Majesty's Government, and are now living in safety, in villages or camps under the protection of His Majesty's forces;*

("We have still as many honest men to fight you with as you have traitors and captured prisoners from us," rejoined the burghers.)

"And whereas the burghers of the late Republics, now under arms against His Majesty's forces, are not only few in number, but have also lost nearly all their guns, and war requisites, and are without proper military organisation, and are therefore not in a position to carry on a regular war, or to make any organised resistance against His Majesty's forces in any part of the country;

("We are doing our best," said the Boers.)

"And whereas the burghers who are now still under arms, although not in a position to carry on a regular war, continue to make attacks on small posts and divisions of His Majesty's forces, to plunder and to destroy farms, and to cut the railway and the telegraph lines, both in the Orange River Colony and in the Transvaal and other parts of His Majesty's South African possessions;

("We are doing our best," repeated the stubborn Boers, "but we will try to do better.")

"And whereas the country is thus kept in a state of unrest, and the carrying on of agriculture and industries is hindered;

("We are trying to make it as unpleasant for you as we can," suggested the Boers, politely.)

"*And whereas His Majesty's Government has decided to make an end of the situation which involves unnecessary bloodshed and devastation, and which is ruining the great majority of the inhabitants, who are willing to live in peace, and are desirous of earning a livelihood for themselves and their families,*" etc.

("Get out and go home, then," said the Boers, succinctly.)

Lord Kitchener's proclamation ended with the threat of eternal banishment for all those burghers who should prove so depraved as to continue the war after the 15th of September. But the burghers, finding that this, the noisiest battle of the year, was but one of words, took heart and breath, and replied in kind.

"Your Excellency tells us that our cause is hopeless; but, upon looking the matter over, we dare to disagree," responded their heavy batteries. "A year ago the Cape Colony was altogether free from our commandos. The Orange Free State was almost entirely in your

hands; towns, railway, villages,—practically the whole country. In the South African Republic the situation was the same. But to-day the Cape Colony is overrun with our commandos; its greater part they really hold in temporary possession. Many of the inhabitants of that colony, angered at the injustice being done us by you, are joining these commandos, adding materially to our forces. In the Orange Free State Your Excellency is in possession of the capital, the railways, and half a dozen towns not on the railways. The rest of the country we hold absolutely. The same state of affairs prevails in the Transvaal. In both States the keeping of order and the administration of justice are managed by us. At the risk of seeming discourteous we venture to state that Your Excellency's jurisdiction in our countries is limited by the range of Your Excellency's guns."

The brave and simple Boers, heartened as well as beguiled by the deceitful truths that went to make up this natural, almost universal response to the threat and bluster of England, forgot that their country was ruined; that their

hearths and homes were wrecked; that their cattle were looted and killed by the thousand; that their women and children were made prisoners, insulted, and carried away by the troops and armed Kaffirs; that their rulers and those high in government were either in the field or fled the country, or, like random kings on a chess-board, were moving hither and thither to avoid, to postpone, the final check. They forgot all these things, and laughed at the British proclamation.

"Can we now," they asked themselves, "when it is merely a question of banishment, shrink from our duty? Can we become faithless to the hundreds of killed and prisoners who sacrificed their lives and their freedom for the fatherland? Can we lose faith in a just God, who has so wonderfully upheld us until now? No, should we do so, we should be despised, not only by all honest men, but even by ourselves."

The war went on with renewed vigor.

Over the cold and long-deserted ruins of both Baakenhoogte and Blaauwkop the grasses of two seasons grew luxuriant and green.

CHAPTER II.

FOR some miles east of Pan, a station in central Middelburg on the railway line that leads from the Transvaal capital through Portuguese East Africa to the sea, the road runs level with the plain through an almost characterless stretch of veldt. At distances of a thousand yards—something over half a mile apart—a series of little blockhouses, bristling with ferocious approaches and entanglements of barbed wire, lay strung like infrequent beads along the line. Parallel to the right of way, and reaching as far up and down the line as the eye could see, a wide strip of burned and blackened earth marked unmistakably, as well by night as by day, the location and direction of the railroad. This strip had been cleared of the natural clothing of its soil by the English, as an additional protection against raids on passing trains or attacks on the road-bed itself by the Boer commando operating in the district. At night this scorched avenue of emptiness was unremittingly swept by the search-lights of the Eng-

lish blockhouses. Under constant and minute inspection by day from these same little forts, no object could blot it, no living being could cross it, without being observed. But the two long parallel lines of bush and trees, green and untouched by fire, that lay north and south of the road, seemed almost to exist for purposes of concealment, and, when so used, could serve their purpose well.

On a certain day in September, 1901,—a day so late in the month that, according to Lord Kitchener's proclamation, their capture meant their deportation,—a large party of His Majesty's subjects by annexation, but rebels still, lay in cheerful ambush in the edge of the woods north of the railway line three miles to the east of Pan. The majority of them, some hundred men, had been in the vicinity since the previous evening, and, while waiting for their commander, a chosen few had during the night slipped across the open space, avoiding the straying beams of the search-lights, and with the aid of a trowel, a couple of sticks of dynamite, a cartridge-primer, and a gunlock, arranged a grim

surprise for the next armoured train that should pass that way. Their commander, Danie Linde, had arrived during the morning with a small escort, and now lay near the middle of his line, watching the railroad.

At about this period of the war the Boer generals had decided that they would be able to do better work if their forces were divided up into small commandos, and they acted upon the decision. This new arrangement of forces made it impossible for great battles to be fought, but it offered the Boers the opportunity of frequently and from more than one point attacking the enemy when he was on the march, of often engaging him in small but disastrous skirmishes, and of harassing him constantly and in widely separated localities at the same time, with but little loss to themselves.

Danie, now at the head of his old commando, which he had finally and safely rejoined more than a year before, was on his way to the town of Ermelo, where he expected to find and capture or dislodge a small English garrison which had been quartered there in undisturbed quiet

for some months. He had grasped at the opportunity, when it was presented to him, with an eagerness which had astounded the little council of the officers of his district, who were accustomed to meet at regular intervals for the discussion and assignment of their local campaigns. He explained to them that Ermelo was a district where he was very well acquainted, but he did not tell them he had not heard, even by passing mention, of a little family at Blaauwkop with which his hopes for the future were closely interwoven. He did not tell them that his hopes, his fears, during the long period in which he could get no word, no knowledge, of Bettie or of Blaauwkop, had become mountains to oppress his heart. But he was going now to find out for himself. Even if ten thousand men blocked his way at Ermelo, he would make or find a passage through them to Blaauwkop. His own home at Baakenhoogte he had upon his return found burned to the ground, his parents, his two sisters, seized and taken to one of the numerous concentration camps, he knew not which. His feelings about

that horror, and, indeed, up to this time his terrible anxiety about Bettie, he had been able to master. He had cursed bitterly, both aloud and in his heart; but he had shut his teeth grimly together, and aimed the straighter, struck the harder, whenever afterward he had come across one of that hated race. But now, with the knowledge that he was soon to be assured, either for good or ill, of the fate of those others,—of that one whom he loved best of all,—his emotions became overpowering. The fierce eagerness of his spirit during the past few days had infected his men. They lay restless in the edge of the bush, their eyes scanning the track, the distant blockhouses, and their leader's stern, drawn face, while their hands twitched nervously about the locks of their rifles.

The sun was beating fiercely down from an unclouded sky upon the rails. The hot iron threw shimmering waves of heat into the visible air. The wire wound and meshed around the distant blockhouses shone and glistened wherever the brilliant sunlight rested upon its

strands and barbs. The reflectors of the search-lights mounted on the tops of the blockhouses caught and returned the sun's rays with such intense brightness that they looked like globes of white fire.

It had been Danie's intention, when he first decided to cross the railroad at this point, to make his attack at night. But he had learned upon his arrival that the road was patrolled daily by an armoured train, and he had changed his programme, to include, if possible, its destruction. The usual time for its passing came and went. Danie was seized with a very devil of impatience, and his heart, full fifty miles to the south, was calling him, almost dragging him, to Blaauwkop. He changed his mind again, and decided to cross the line at once.

He leaped to his feet, and called his veldt-cornet Koos Nel. The murmurs of conversation among the men died down to an expectant hush. In order to take his wagons across,—for his, like almost all of the Boer commandos, was burdened even on short marches with these encumbrances,—he saw that there was but one

thing to do; namely, to storm the two nearest blockhouses, overpower their garrisons, and take his convoy across between them. The final arrangements were hastily made. Danie prepared to lead half his men against the blockhouse on the right, from which direction the armoured train had been expected to arrive. His veldt-cornet was to take the other half, and storm that to the left.

The sections left their horses behind with the wagons, under the guard of a few men, and marched in scattered order toward their respective points of attack. When they had reached to within three hundred yards of the blockhouses, the garrisons opened with a hail of Lee-Metford bullets, the British firing both from within shelter of their forts and from behind mounds of earth outside. The stronghold attacked by Danie offered a most determined resistance for about twenty minutes, and only surrendered when the muzzles of the Boer rifles were thrust through its loopholes. At the cries for mercy and surrender the firing gradually ceased. The English soldiers ran out,

holding up their hands. Danie was making ready to proceed to the assistance of his lieutenant at the other blockhouse, where the attack still continued, when suddenly a long, shrill scream sounded almost over his head, he was borne backward off the rails by a frightened, frantic rush of both his own men and his new prisoners, and the long-expected train went thundering by the captured blockhouse at full speed, almost sucking some of the startled by-standers into the whirlpool of its path. The dozen seconds that followed its passing seemed an age to the staring Boers, but the train reached the spot where the mine had been laid. There was a terrific explosion, something went up in the air. Then the shrill whistle stopped, and all was silent.

Nothing was left of the heavily armoured engine and cars but a few fragments on the spot. The rest of the material of which the train had been composed, and the shreds of the bodies of the men who had manned it, were scattered in indistinguishable remnants far and wide. As soon as the Boers could re-

cover from their stupefaction, Danie led them forward to aid in the storming of the other blockhouse; but there was no need of such action. All firing had ceased upon the blowing up of the mine, and the garrison was already surrendering.

That night the commando, having covered the intervening miles of country at a rapid gait, crossed the Middelburg-Ermelo road where it entered the Klipstapel Berg, and pitched their camp on the northern confines of that great mountain. After a few hours' rest they were again upon the march; and in the grey dawn they descended upon the little town of Ermelo, asleep on the plateau beyond. The surprise was well planned and as well executed. From four different points of the compass did the gallant Boers burst simultaneously past the silent, outlying farm-houses and into the leafy streets of the quiet town. Their shouts and cheers, the thunderous clatter of their horses' hoofs, aroused the few and peaceful inhabitants, who stared, white-faced and open-mouthed, from doors and windows. But

no terrified English voices were heard shouting through the morning mist, no bugle blared alarm, no rifle blazed forth at them, no khaki uniforms were seen pouring from the houses or dodging through the streets. It was indeed a peaceful victory. The four small assaulting columns met in the middle of Ermelo, and pulled up at sight of each other, astonished, wondering, a little crestfallen. Then, as the truth of the matter broke upon them, the men burst into a roar of laughter.

"Hi, old Oom!" shouted one of them to an old man with a long white beard who stood by in the grassy square, still staring at them with open mouth, his fingers spread wide apart, "what do you think of us now, eh? We have taken you and your whole town without the loss of a man on either side and without firing a shot."

The old man grinned in toothless appreciation of the joke. "We thought you were the English come again," he said. "They, too, captured us in the early morning without losing a man, when they first came to us last winter,

but only after much firing of cannons and rifles, although there was not a burgher to fight them within twenty miles. Luckily, the khakis cannot shoot straight; and so nobody was killed but old Vrouw Pienaar's donkey, which was grazing in the veldt the other side of the town."

Danie rode up to the speaker. "When did the English go away, Oom?" he asked.

"The damned khaki dogs went away into the mountains two weeks ago, General," responded the old man. "Why did you not come to us sooner? You would have eaten them up. We are now free from them, and God grant that they never come back to us."

Danie still sat quiet on his horse, looking down on the village patriarch. Three times he tried to put to him the question that haunted his soul; but, though he licked his dry lips, summoned up all his courage, he could not, dared not, form it. He turned away at last, and rode up to his veldt-cornet.

"I am going to leave you for a little while, Koos," he said, "and I shall take two men with me. I may not be back before night. Make

what arrangements you think best for quarters in the town. We shall remain here for a day or two." He turned and called two burghers, and galloped down the street.

The ten miles that lay between Blaauwkop and the town he covered within the hour. As he approached the vicinity of the farm, his heart misgave him; for he could see over the wide areas that used to proclaim the industry and prosperity of Dirk Uys no grazing sheep, no high-stacked ricks of corn or grain, no signs of tilled or cultivated fields. The air above the little randt that still hid the farmstead from his sight was clear and free from smoke. With the fear of a great misfortune clutching at his heart, he pulled up his horse, and waved back the two men who were following him at a little distance. Slowly, almost reluctantly, he moved to the top of the rise before him.

The scene of utter desolation that met his eyes, the untold horrors conjured up by his imagination in connection with that scene, partially paralysed for the moment his nerves, his centres of action as well as of feeling. He sat

motionless, breathless, as if carved in stone, his wide eyes fixed on the silent ruins. Then with a ferocious cry of agony he drove his spurs into his horse's flanks, and dashed down the well-remembered road to where the home of his beloved, the treasury of his happiness, had once stood.

Some ragged portions of the red brick walls were still standing, overrun with grass and climbing vines. From one firm corner a section of the corrugated iron roof slanted to the ground, brown with dirt and rust. The wide stone steps that had led up to the pleasant stoep lay tumbled to a shapeless heap, half buried in the encroaching soil. He dismounted and walked, trembling in every limb, into the middle of the cold and repelling space whose faint outlines yet marked the bounds and limits of the human habitation that had once occupied it. He tried to trace from the signs at his feet rather than from memory the locations of the different living rooms. But the flames had been so thorough in their work, the destruction of the house so complete, that he

could not do so. A twisted mass of rusty and fragile wires tangled among the rank kwitch grass convinced him that he was looking at all that remained of the piano to the accompaniment of which Bettie had sung him so many happy songs. The recollection almost overcame him, and he strode hastily out of the ruins of the house. He looked about him further. Great circles where the grass seemed to grow more luxuriantly green than elsewhere were all that showed the old location of the kraals. There were left no traces of the neat, clipped hedges that had enclosed the garden and bordered the paths. The once bright and blooming beds had long been choked and overgrown with the grass and weeds of the veldt. Their sites were alone indicated by a few hardy perennial blossoms that still managed to struggle through the tangled mass around them. Danie turned and walked out to the road, his eyes blinded by tears. He could look no longer on the grave of Blaauwkop. He went up to his horse, which had stood patiently awaiting him, and, placing his hand on the saddle and his

foot in the stirrup, prepared to mount and ride away. Just as he raised himself from the ground, he thought he heard his name called. He dropped to the road, and whirled about.

From the direction of the ruins a strangely familiar figure was approaching.

"Maliwe!" cried Danie, in the utmost astonishment. "Maliwe! how come you here—where—what—?"

The old Kaffir came running to him, and fell on his knees in front of him, clasping Danie's legs in his withered arms.

"Oh, Baas Danie, Baas Danie," he cried, "I came back, and now you have come back; but the others, they are gone,—they will not return. I have waited so long"—

With a sinking at his heart, Danie grasped him roughly by the shoulders. "What do you mean?" he gasped. "Are they—is Miss Bettie dead?"

Maliwe rose tottering, with the tears streaming down his face. "I do not know, Baas, I do not know. But little Baas Gert is dead,—my little Gertie. They drove his skull in here in

front of the house where we are standing, more than two rains ago, the day that Blaauwkop was burned and we started out on the long trek over the mountains. We buried him far out there on the veldt." And he pointed north with shaking finger.

"Tell me all about it," said Danie, in a hoarse voice. "What happened? The old man,—or the grown sons,—were they not here?"

Maliwe shook his head mournfully. "No," he answered, "no one was here of the men of the family except myself. The way of it was this: We had managed the farm for months alone. The old baas had been home but once since he went off to fight the English, and the others not at all. I have heard since that Baas Piet was killed at Elandslaagte. But one day, just before the rains, the Natal khakis came to Ermelo, and burned some of the farms near the town. We saw the great fires in the sky that night. The next day they came to Blaauwkop, and spoke many words; but it was in English, and Miss Bettie talked to them, so all I understood was that they were coming

again to burn the place. Anyway, they went off without doing anything. But the night of the burning at Ermelo all our Kaffirs had stolen away, and there were no servants left on the farm. But, after the khakis left, they came back, and with them other Kaffirs in swarms, and many of them wore the uniforms of the police, and said that they were masodga. Then they set fire to the houses and kraals, and danced dances around the fires. But we had loaded the wagon, and little Baas Egbert had driven some sheep and cattle into the hills; and the others were riding behind, and I was following with the wagon. Then Gert came back to help me, and a great Kaffir masodga stole his horse, and struck him on the head with his kerrie, so that he fell dead to the ground. Oh, Baas Danie, but it was awful! I lifted him, and placed him in the wagon; and we carried him with us until we buried him at the foot of the hill. Then we trekked over the mountains."

"And what happened then?" whispered Danie.

"Well," continued Maliwe, with a sigh, "for a great many days we trekked about on the veldt and crossed many rivers, hardly resting anywhere, running away from the khakis. And there were many other people in wagons, mostly women and children, who were also running away from them. But at last they caught us together with a lot of others as we were resting by a river in Lydenburg. They burned our wagons and killed our cattle, and took us to a great laager in Natal. But I, who could do nothing more for my mistress, ran away and came back to Blaauwkop, where I have been waiting for some one to return."

There was silence for a few moments. Danie looked out across the mountains over which Bettie and her mother and brother, attended alone by this faithful servant, had made their lonesome flight only to fall into the hands of the enemy they were attempting to escape. And his thoughts stopped for a moment at the solitary little grave that lay somewhere far out on the veldt. He turned with tears in his eyes to the old Kaffir, and held out his hands.

"I can give you but poor thanks, Maliwe," he began, "for what you did for me and mine; for you know how it was between your young mistress and myself. But I should like to ask one thing more. I wish to see little Gert's grave, if you can guide me to it."

"I have not forgotten it, Baas Danie," responded Maliwe; "for I dug it myself, and covered it with great stones. But it is far. If you will get me one of those horses,"—and he pointed toward Danie's two companions waiting on the rise,—"I will take you to it now."

Danie mounted, and, riding to the randt, soon returned with a horse. The Kaffir leaped upon its back, and together they galloped northward into the rolling veldt.

When they returned, it was already afternoon. Rejoining the two patient burghers where these had made themselves a comfortable shelter beneath some trees near the devastated homestead, they slipped from their horses, and loosened the girths to rest and ease them. The Kaffir silently turned toward the ruins.

"Stay, Maliwe," called Danie, "you cannot live here. Come back with me to the village, and I will give you a horse and a rifle and take you with me when I go."

The old Kaffir shook his head. "No, Baas Danie," he answered. "I like you very much. You are almost one of the family, and I should be glad to go with you. Also I should enjoy very much shooting Englishmen. But I must remain where I am. I must be here when old Baas Dirk gets home, to tell him what has happened. For he will surely come." And he disappeared around a corner of the broken wall.

A few minutes later Danie and his two companions mounted their horses, and rode away in the direction of the town. At the top of the little randt over which the road led, he stopped and took one long, last look at the ruins of Blaauwkop. Then he set his face finally toward Ermelo, and was lost to view.

That very night the commando marched northward again, and before dawn the Klipstapel Berg had swallowed it up.

CHAPTER III.

A MONTH after his return from his fruitless and somewhat inglorious raid on Ermelo and his equally fruitless but infinitely more dispiriting visit to Blaauwkop, Danie Linde found himself within the borders of the Orange Free State, at the head of a special and selected commando of four hundred men. The object of his expedition was, after passing through the Free State, as the fighting burghers still persisted in calling it, the invasion of Cape Colony.

Such expeditions of invasion had become more and more numerous as the war progressed; and during its last year, especially, they were of as frequent occurrence as they were desperately daring in character. One well-known Free State commando had crossed the Orange River, and fought its way south through Cape Colony, by way of Maraisburg and Cradock and Pearston, until it actually reached the coast at Algoa Bay, cutting the railroad at Alicedale Junction, scarcely forty miles north

of Port Elizabeth. Another, even more daring, had passed south-west through the Cape Colony by way of Burghersdorp, Middelburg, Aberdeen, Willowmore, Uniondale, and Oudtshoorn, striking west from the latter place to within twenty miles of the Capetown railway, and south from Uniondale to Mossel Bay. Still a third crossed the Free State boundary where the Zand River joins the Orange, and made its way westward through Britstown, Carnarvon, Williston, Calvinia, and Van Ryn's Dorp to the Atlantic Ocean itself, which it struck at Lambert's Bay. This commando, moreover, made several destructive descents on the main line of the great railroad which lay to the south of its course, seriously, if only temporarily, interrupting the only line of communication of the English armies in the north.

The success of these expeditions, the fever of unrest which they bred, and the increasing enlistment in the service of the Republics which they stimulated among the Cape Colony Boers, together with the wide alarm they caused among the British authorities, gained

them great favour with the leaders of the Boer forces. Picked commandos from the Transvaal, of which Danie Linde's was one, were sent to aid the adventurous Free Staters in the new invasion, or, rather, series of invasions, into British territory.

Danie passed slowly and uneventfully through the greater part of the Free State. Guided and guarded by the forces of those districts through which he travelled, he managed to avoid collision with any of the numerous British columns that were operating in and occupying the Orange Free State. It was his duty to get his commando across the border into the Cape Colony in as effective a condition as possible. He dared not risk weakening the force of the blows he might have to strike by even the small loss he would be sure to sustain, should he engage with the enemy while on his way through the Free State. In trying to avoid an English force stationed at Wepener, he had been forced to the railroad, then upon his right, and was for some time in considerable danger of being hemmed in and compelled to

fight. But he had managed to escape an action, and the net spread by his enemies at the same time, by leading his men across, or, rather, underneath, the railroad, by way of the Kaffir Spruit, concealed by the night and by its high banks.

Having the railroad now on his left, he attempted to continue his movement south. But he had been observed, he had made trouble, he had withdrawn himself unaccountably from one net spread for him, his aim was guessed. His location to the west of the railroad was determined, small bodies of troops were massing on his right and rear. His scouts began to bring him in suspicious tidings. He began to feel very uneasy without actually seeing any numbers of the enemy at first. But he noticed that he was being pressed out of his course on to the line of the railway, which, guarded as it was, he particularly wished to avoid. Soon he found that he was being inveigled into little rear-guard actions, which, while still of small moment, convinced him that something more serious was near.

It was about seven o'clock of a warm spring evening in October. As the darkness increased, the pressure on his rear became more distinct, and he had to send back an additional fifty men to stand off the impetuous enemy. He was being attacked by well-mounted cavalry, which, he knew by his reports, already overmatched him, and was growing in numbers every moment. His front was not only becoming embarrassed by the increasingly difficult nature of the ground, but was also menaced from a distance by a small body of infantry he knew to be stationed some miles ahead in anticipation of his coming. Forced to decide upon an immediate course of action, Danie came to the conclusion that a bold attempt to recross the railroad under the cover of darkness would be the safest plan for him to pursue.

He knew that he was opposite to the station of Springfontein. The building, like all stations along the railway line held by the British, had been fortified and sheathed with iron to serve as a blockhouse. The embankments along the right of way, everywhere else protected by

rifle-pits behind broad ditches and rows of wire entanglements, sloped, just to the south of the station, down to a flat, wide crossing. This crossing was that of the important highway that ran between Fauresmith and Bethulie, and was protected and guarded by small earth-works flanking the highway and at acute angles to the railroad, each of the four short lines of works finally refusing to the open country.

Danie rode to the head of his little column, and, bending his course to the east, led it to within a quarter of a mile of the railway. There he halted, and sent back word to his energetic rear-guard to force back the attacking cavalry, if possible, and at the same time to be prepared to make a dash over the crossing when they should receive the order. He then moved forward himself in the dusk with fifty men to within a hundred yards of the crossing, and opened a savage and sustained fire upon its defenders, paying little or no attention to the noisy but ineffective blockhouse nearly two hundred yards up the line, and now barely visible through the semi-darkness. When his

advance had been engaged for ten minutes and their fire was at its hottest, he sent back the expected word to the rear-guard, and at the same time ordered his main body to advance. As it reached the skirmish line, he placed himself at its head, shouting for a charge. With a storm of yells and cheers the ponderous mass of men, crowded into the closest order in the narrow road, bore down upon the crossing in an indistinguishable whirlwind of dust and smoke and thunder. The countlessly successive, yard-long flashes from the frantic rifles levelled at them across the earthworks and enbankment served but to light up strangely and intermittently the tossed arms, the mass of white, set faces, the blazing eyes and foaming bits of the crowded hundreds of horses. The thin, unshrinking line thrown hastily along the track at the crossing to check the charge crumpled like tissue at the first touch of the onrushing mass. Steadily, swiftly, resistlessly the commando streamed across the railway and into the road beyond, the skirmishers falling into its rear as it rushed by them, and

crossing with it. The noise of its passing was like that of a heavily loaded freight train rolling over a bridge. In its wake, stamped and trodden out of all semblance to humanity, lay the crushed corpses of the brave English line and of the twenty hapless Boers who had fallen in front of the charge.

As soon as he was across, Danie divided the commando, and from the fields at both sides of the road re-engaged the full attention of the enemy by a withering fire upon their works. Just in time to profit by this effective diversion, the gallant rear-guard burst from the further darkness to the confusion of the unexpectant English, and followed the main division across the railroad almost without loss.

Gradually withdrawing the commando from the railroad, and replacing the rear-guard in its old position, Danie made his way into a line of hills that rose about a mile from the scene of his action. As he entered its defiles with the last of his rear-guard, the sound of renewed and fierce firing at the crossing was faintly heard through the still night air.

"Allemagtig, Commandant!" exclaimed one of the men, looking back. "What was that?"

Danie grinned amiably. "I expect it is your old friends the English cavalry trying to cross the railroad after us," he answered. "Perhaps they look too much like Boers in the darkness."

Whether he was right or wrong in his surmise, he was nevertheless able two hours later to make his laager without being disturbed. It was evident that for the time being, at least, the British pursuit had been discontinued. The hurts of the slightly injured men were dressed that night in camp. Danie himself was among them with a clean bullet wound through the calf of his left leg. He had no seriously wounded with him. If there had been such,—he hated to think so,—they had fallen to meet death in a horrible form beneath the horses' feet in the charge at the crossing.

The next morning Danie managed to get in touch with one of the small Free State commandos that laagered among the mountains to watch and harass the English. From them

he procured not only forage and the horses which he needed, but also, with the permission of its commandant, enough eager recruits to make up for half his losses of the night before. The dozen new men were twice welcome for that, knowing the country, they would also be able to guide him intelligently through the passes and between the English columns to the Orange River, which he hoped to cross within twenty-four hours. This river now lay but twenty miles to the south of him. He was practically certain that no further obstructions, with the exception of the crude barriers of nature, lay between him and the Cape Colony, his goal. By noon his laager was struck, and he was ready for the march. All his scouts but two had returned. These two, Jan and Hendrek by name, had not come back. Danie, impatient, called his adjutant.

"What about Jan and the other man, Redelinghuis?" he asked.

The adjutant thumbed his chin. "I wonder, Commandant," he answered. "They should have been in two hours ago. It may be that

they have sighted a column from the hills, and are waiting to make sure of its direction before they report."

Danie waved his hand irritably. "Go and see"—he began. But at that moment a murmur arose among the men. The two officers turned their heads in the direction of the sound.

"'Here they come," exclaimed the adjutant, "but there are four of them. I believe they have captured a couple of khakis."

In fact, four men were appearing over the crest of a distant rise, still silhouetted in black against the sky. Danie rode slowly forward to meet them; but, as they approached him, his wonder and doubt were changed to surprise and joy. For two of the men were, as he had felt assured, the missing scouts, while of the two strangers he recognised the first as one of General Cris Botha's adjutants, whom he had known before the war, and the other as Abraham Uys, Bettie's eldest brother.

He leaped from his horse, and ran toward them with outstretched hands.

"Groenwald! Abraham,—Abraham!" he cried

as he seized their hands. "How is it that you are here? Where did you come from?"

"We have been following you for three days," they explained, "ever since we came upon your spoor. We are riding with despatches for two of the commandos in the Cape Colony, and we have had a hard enough time of it. Hearing that you were ahead of us, we tried to join you; but you made such a racket at Springfontein that we could not follow you through. So we had to go around."

Danie shook their hands again. "Well, I am mighty glad that you got here, anyway. I suppose you two tried to follow my example, and charge across the line. I saw and heard more heavy firing down there some time after we had got into the hills."

"No, Danie, Groenwald and I are not as reckless as all that, although we are very brave," laughed Abraham, "and although two Boers should be a match for a hundred Englishmen. That second battle was the cavalry under General Kelly-Kenny trying to follow you. The English general wasted an hour before he

found out that you had slipped away; and, when he came to the crossing hot-haste after you, his friends thought it was another Boer commando, and played the devil with him. And I really believe he thought you had captured the line, and were holding it against him. They fought for more than an hour before they discovered their mistake."

"That was why I was not pursued any further then," laughed Danie. And they rode back arm in arm to the commando.

The start was at last made. The two despatch riders were to accompany Danie to the Orange River, where he had agreed to take their despatches over into the Cape Colony for delivery. As the long column of horsemen wound forth upon the march, its commander dropped to the rear with Abraham, burning with anxiety for the news he hoped his intended brother-in-law could give him.

"Abraham," he broke the silence, "you know what I am wild to hear. I was a prisoner with the English after Dundee for six months. And after I escaped I was for more than a year

fighting in the mountains, with never a word from parent or friend. Eight weeks ago I was sent to Ermelo, and rode out to Blaauwkop to find it level with the ground. It might have been sown with salt. Abraham, where are your mother and sister? Are they—is she dead?"

Abraham sighed. "Ach," he said, "Danie, what have I to tell you? Mother and Bettie and the little brothers were alive when we last heard of them. They were in the concentration camp at Pietermaritzburg. This news came through General Botha's wife, who came out, by permission of the English, to see her husband when he was ill."

"Then they are alive, thank God!" said Danie, gratefully; "but," he added gently, "not all, Abraham. Brave little Gertie was killed while trying to defend his father's family and property." And he laid his hand softly on the young man's arm.

Abraham blanched, and bit his lip. "That is the second," he said simply. "Piet was killed at Elandslaagte. And father, you know, was captured in Lichtenburg."

Danie did not know what to say. The two friends rode along for a mile or two side by side in silence.

"Well," said Danie, finally, "we are all suffering dreadfully from this war. My own parents and my dear sisters have long been in one of their concentration camps, and I do not know whether they are alive or dead. But I can tell you, Abraham, to hear that Bettie is alive and probably well has taken a frightful load off my heart."

Under the guidance of the Free State recruits the day passed without incident. When evening fell, the great river lay before them, its broad waters ominously crimsoned by the lurid afterglow, sullenly black where they flowed beneath the shadow of the banks. Two small parties of burghers were sent to scout, one east, one west, along the stream. Within the hour they returned to report an unguarded drift three miles below the junction of the Caledon with the Orange.

The two despatch riders warmly shook hands with Danie and mounted to ride back a few

miles into the hills for the night, that they might safely rest themselves and their horses preparatory to starting on their long return journey to the Transvaal. Danie accompanied them a little way into the veldt. He looked long and earnestly at Abraham as he rode beside him. His thoughts were many. Finally he spoke aloud.

"Forgive me for my uncompanionable mood, boy," he said with a faint smile, "but you remind me so much of your sister that I cannot keep my mind off her for a moment. Your news of her, meagre as it was, made me very happy. And I cannot help thinking that your coming upon me here so accidentally, so many miles from home, especially after my late dreadful visit to Blaauwkop, is of great good omen." Even as he spoke, his pale face set and changed at the recollection of the dark forebodings with which the bloody waters of the Orange had filled his mind scarcely an hour before. "I hope, Abraham," he continued after a moment, "that, when you return to General Botha, you will manage to send, either through him

or his wife, my love to Bettie and your mother. Tell them, if you can, all that I have told you,—and more. You know what I mean."

"I will do so if it is possible, Danie," returned the other. "You may trust me to do all that I can. But you know how remote such opportunities are."

"Yes," answered Danie, slowly, "I know. But I must go back. It is time to say good-bye."

With a new impulse the two young men who were so nearly brothers embraced each other; and, after a warm clasp of the hand and a hearty "God bless you!" from Groenwald, Danie once more turned his back on the free mountains and his face to the river.

As nine o'clock he and his commando were trampling British soil.

CHAPTER IV.

THE concentration camp at Pietermaritzburg was established after the war was more than half over with the object of relieving the pressure in the camps that lay farther north and west in the zone of hostilities. The ever-increasing number of captured women and children,—which toward the last of the year of 1901 amounted to over seventy thousand,—and the growing scarcity of food-products in the devastated and overrun Republics, swarming with armies aggregating more than three hundred thousand men, compelled the British authorities to remove to their own unharassed and still fertile and productive territories the majority of their helpless captives. The larger camps, such as that of Pietermaritzburg, soon began to show signs of overcrowding. The Boer women and children, totally unaccustomed to their new way of living, deprived not only of the ordinary comforts, but of many of the actual necessities of health as well as life, began early to succumb to many diseases,

of which typhoid was the most disastrous, and among which homesickness proved not the least fatal.

The concentration camp was situated east of the town. Its wide white sea of tents stretched far in every direction, for it was a canvas city of five thousand souls. To the southward the ground dropped in a series of small and gentle declivities to the bed of a little spruit,—the laundry of the camp. From Monday morning until Saturday night the sloping banks and the tall sour grass of the surrounding field were covered with white and drying clothing, so that from a distance the vicinity looked like an extension of this city of tents. At almost any time from sunrise to sunset, on any one of the secular days of the week, rows of women in white kappies, or sun-bonnets, could be seen lining both sides of the stream and laboring in its waters. But above a certain point in its course they never went for the purposes of washing or rinsing clothes. The stream above this point—a mere rivulet and pool among the rocks of the little kloof in

which it rose—was sacred to a line, almost unending by day, of white-kappied bucket-bearers, bringing the supply of water for drinking and cooking,—a never-ending need.

Looking at the camp from the spruit, it appeared to be surrounded at all times during six days of the week with a white wall. This was because the high barbed-wire fence that enclosed the prisoners—or, as the British government chose to put it, its "guests"—was also used for the purpose of drying clothes. It was usually hung with white as high as the women could reach. The evenness of its circumference was broken by day by sentry-guarded but open gates, through which the women passed to such of their avocations as called them to the spruit. The main gate, near which the galvanised iron office of the superintendent stood, faced the town of Pietermaritzburg. But except on bright and sunny days Pietermaritzburg was but a misty vision in the distance.

In front of one among the innumerable rows of tents, striving fruitlessly to bring a damp bunch of poplar sticks to a blaze beneath

her kettle, crouched Mrs. Uys, wan, pale, and feeble. The nine months that she had passed in this hell in the centre of Natal, since she and her two children had been moved south from their first captivity at Volksrust, had in part broken her spirit, but had not accustomed her body to the new conditions and exigencies of captive existence. She hated her captors—her jailers as she called them, her guardians and protectors as they called themselves—with a deeper hatred than ever. But step by step, since that fateful day at Blaauwkop a year and a half ago, they had proved their power, she her weakness. She had heard long since of the death of her beloved Piet at Elandslaagte, of her husband's capture and exile. With her own hands she had laid her little Gert in his lonely grave on the veldt. With her own eyes, strained and weakened by weeping though they had been for months, she could see her daughter and her youngest child daily decline. She believed that she should never see her husband again, that her two tall sons would never return to her.

The day, which had broken bright and sunny, had clouded over. A raw east wind from the direction of Durban and the ocean swept gustily down the long, bare streets of the camp, maliciously snatching at the innumerable garments that whitened the fields outside and flapped from the encircling barricade. Within the camp the scanty grass that stood yet untrodden between the protecting guy-ropes of the tents shrank tremulously from the chill blow, and the thin, weak flames of the noon fires at the ends and corners of the streets paled and flickered at its touch.

The morning of Monday, the world's wash-day, was nearly over. Bettie Uys, who had just finished her own and her mother's washing, came wearily back from the spruit. Her pale face looked pathetically tired and drawn; but her dark eyes, under-ringed with the shadows of care and grief, looked more deep, more luminous than ever. She stopped near her mother, who was still struggling against the disadvantages of wind and wet to induce the reluctant poplar sticks to burn.

"What are you doing, mother?" asked Bettie.

Mrs. Uys raised her eyes, red and watery from the smoke, to her daughter's face.

"I am trying to make some poffertjes [dough cakes] for our dinner," she answered querulously; "but I am afraid that we shall never eat them. This was all the wood that Egbert could get this morning, and it is too wet to burn."

Bettie dropped to her knees to windward of the fire with a bright smile. "I think that I can make it burn, mother dear," she said cheerily; and, lifting her apron, she fanned the fire vigorously from above. In a few moments the sputtering embers burst into a flame, and the defeated sticks blazed obediently up into the raw air.

Bettie sank back from her exertions with a sigh. Her mother looked at her at once gratefully and anxiously.

"Thank you, my dear child," she said, "you always find time to help me, even though you do much more than your share of the work of this horrible existence. How are you feeling, dear? Are you any better to-day?"

Bettie closed her eyes wearily, and passed her hand across her brow. "Not very well to-day, mother," she answered. "My head is aching badly this morning."

The third member of the little family, the boy Egbert, came running up from the camp canteen, whither his mother had sent him for a can of condensed milk.

"O mother, O Bettie," he cried as he dropped the can into his mother's lap, "the officer in the office down at the gate says he wishes to speak with you, zus' Bettie, and that you must come at once."

Bettie flushed angrily. "Why can't he come himself to see me?" she demanded petulantly. "Does he think Boer women are Kaffirs, that he sends for them in such a fashion? I will not go. But I wonder what he wants," she continued reflectively.

Mrs. Uys clasped her hands together in great anxiety. "Oh," she cried, "you must go, Bettie. I am afraid not to have you. Who knows what the reason is, or what may happen if you don't?"

Bettie rose resignedly. "Well, mother," she said, "if you want me to, I will go. But I hate to be called like a dog, and to have to obey just as if these English were our masters. It is almost more than I can stand."

"I know, dear," returned her mother, humbly. "You are yet young, and your pride is not yet broken. But I am getting old, and I have suffered so much since this frightful war started that I am only too ready to avoid any further pain or trouble by submission and obedience to those who hold me in their power. For, say what you will, the English are your masters and mine."

Bettie answered nothing, but she bit her lip and her dark eyes flashed as she walked to her tent to put on a clean skirt and a fresh waist of her own washing in which to answer the unpleasant summons.

The flaps of the tent had been neatly rolled up that morning as usual, according to the strict rules of the camp; and the cold east wind was blowing dismally through the open sides. The girl untied and let down the canvas walls

with a toss of her head and a defiant shake of her little fist toward headquarters at the main entrance. A few minutes later she emerged in her clean but unstarched cotton, and made her way up the street.

The single door of the square little office of the superintendent was closed and locked. From behind the open but grated window that official was, according to his usual habit from eight in the morning till six at night, upholding the dignity and administering the duties of his office as benignantly and as humanely as he could. The usual excited crowd of angry, complaining, and pleading women surrounded and stormed his window. It was against their daily and ceaseless importunities that he had long ago been forced to barricade his door and grate his window. For he, like most Englishmen, especially official Englishmen, failed to understand the Boers and their national and deeply rooted habits and characteristics as completely as the Boers failed to understand the instincts and impulses of the equally stubborn and very insular English race.

From the outskirts of the crowd, into which she could scarcely worm her way at first, Bettie could hear the storm of prayers and questions and demands made upon the unhappy but fortunately caged arbiter of destiny within the concentration camp. Her honest conscience reproached her as she listened, although she could not help smiling at the form that its reproach took.

"Poor man," she said to herself, "he had to send for me. He could not have come to see me himself, even if he had wanted to ten times over; for he would have been torn to pieces the minute he left his office."

Indeed, the superintendent was having a hard time of it.

"I want a permit right away to visit Pietermaritzburg this afternoon," cried one.

"My child is in the hospital, and I want to be allowed to go there at once to see it," energetically demanded another, the tears of distrust standing in her eyes.

"And mine," cried a third, pushing her way up to the window, "my child is in the hospital,

too; and it must be taken out right away. I can nurse it better myself."

A fourth complained that the flour or meal she had lately drawn from the Commissary Department was so bad that neither she nor her neighbours could use it. Yet another alleged that the corned beef had been so rotten for the last three mornings that it had made her and her children sick. In support of her allegations she shoved two open tins of very high-smelling meat through the grating right under the nose of the almost delirious official behind it. A little, blue-eyed woman, straining a healthy, chubby two-year-old to her thin breast, wailed from behind her stouter and stronger compatriots nearer the window that her tent was old and worn, that she could not and would not patch it any more, that both she and her child were suffering bitterly at night from the cold, and that it must be fixed!

After edging forward for nearly half an hour Bettie managed to get within reaching distance of the window. She was almost out of breath.

"You wished to see me, Colonel West,—

Miss Uys—?" she gasped as she struggled to hold her place in front of the grating.

He wiped the perspiration from his brow, and gazed at her helplessly, uncomprehending. Then a sudden light dawned upon his mind, and penetrated through his system until it illuminated his hot, red countenance.

"Oh, yes,—Miss Uys,—yes, yes." He smiled broadly upon her, and fumbled among his papers. "I have a letter for you,—a letter in an official envelope that has not been disturbed by the censor." So saying, he handed out to her a long blue missive, so covered with official stamps and seals that she began to have a dreadful fear of its contents.

"Thank you," she said faintly as she took it.

"Ah, yes," he beamed, "I hope it is good news, Miss Uys. Good-day."

Bettie walked hastily back through the camp, trembling with excitement about the mysterious envelope. She burned to know its contents, yet she dreaded opening it lest it should be the herald of some new grief or misfortune soon to fall upon the little family.

"See here, mother," she stammered as she entered the tent. "Here is what he had for me. I am afraid to open it." And she held out the suspected envelope to Mrs. Uys.

"Sit down, sit down," said her mother, looking anxiously at Bettie's flushed face and brilliant eyes. "You do not look well at all. You frighten me."

The nervously excited girl twisted her fingers together in an effort to control herself. She was quivering in every limb.

"Open it, open it!" she commanded. With feverish intensity she watched her mother gingerly open the envelope and extract some folded sheets of paper.

"Why,—Bettie," began her mother, in a puzzled tone of voice, "this is a letter to you,—and in English,—but I see Danie Linde's name in it."

"Oh!" Bettie gave a great cry of hope and fear, and snatched the paper from her mother's hands. She ran it over with excited eyes from start to finish.

"Listen, mamma," she cried joyously. "Lis-

ten to this. Danie is alive,—he is safe,—he is famous! I will read you the letter. 'Dear Miss Uys,' it begins, 'some days ago I was captured at Hopeton in the Cape Colony by Commandant Danie Linde, who, I may say, is an old friend of mine, and who is, unfortunately for me and for a good many other Englishmen, making a famous raid into the Cape Colony. I promised him, as once before,—during the siege of Ladysmith,—to forward you news of him. Two years ago he was unable to write for himself, so that my poor letter, which I hope you received promptly, had to suffice. But this time he writes a letter for himself, which I herewith enclose. It is with great pleasure that I carry out my promise to him, and I trust sincerely that this will reach you in good time.' "

Mrs. Uys never knew until later the name of the writer of this friendly epistle; for Bettie at the end of the last word made one swoop upon her mother's lap, and seized to clasp to her heart the other, the more than precious contents of the long blue envelope. Out

into the damp field she went, under the misty sun and in the sharp wind. But she was away from the world. Over and over again she read and reread her lover's letter through the long afternoon, bedewing it with her happy tears, pressing to it her lips, her heart, between the reading.

She did not return to the camp until the hour at which its gates closed; and during the evening she sat silent in the tent, her starlike eyes gazing raptly through its canvas walls into the great spaces of the night beyond.

At dawn the next morning she was raging with the fatal fever; and as soon as the gates were opened she was taken to the camp hospital with a desperate attack of the prevalent scourge, typhoid malaria.

CHAPTER V.

ON the third evening after crossing the Orange River into the Cape Colony Danie's commando was trekking slowly southward over the veldt in a long, thin line. The sky was cloudless. The great African full moon shone brightly down upon the moving column and the rugged landscape. The many irregular and isolated kopjes stood out like solemn sentinels over the land, casting long and slowly circling shadows of impenetrable depth. The barren ground for wide extents lacked nature's usual soft covering of grass, but was thickly decked with rolling limestones and with a low brush that resembled the karroobosje of the great desert farther south. Here and there rose in lonely majesty, its dark foliage tipped and crowned with silver, a tall karreebosch dominating the darker plain at its feet.

Every half-hour the commando was halted to allow the rear to come up, and for its commander to receive regularly the reports of the scouts that guarded his front and flanks. Then

the column would recommence its silent march across the veldt.

At ten o'clock the young lieutenant in charge of the vanguard reported a light straight ahead, and that he thought he had heard dogs barking in the distance. Danie ordered a halt at once, and sent two men ahead to investigate. Forty minutes later the scouts returned, and stated that they had found a small English farmstead in their front, occupied only by women. They further stated that, passing themselves off as British foragers, they had learned that the owner of the farm was away, serving in the town guard of Hopeton, a village lying some few miles off to the westward. The two women, they said, were at first terribly frightened, and had told them that it was only lately that a Free State commando had started to loot the farm, but had been driven away by the English force stationed at Hopeton.

After a short conference with his officers, Danie ordered the commando forward, and their next halt was made at the farmstead. The lights in the house had disappeared, and

there was no sign of life about the place. Dismounting, Danie and his adjutant, Redelinghuis, went up to the door, followed by the two scouts, who had entered it before. The adjutant knocked heavily. After some delay the door was timidly opened, and in the light of an unsteady hand-lamp three shaking women revealed themselves, evidently a mother and her two daughters.

"I will not deceive you, ladies," said Danie, politely. "I am Commandant Linde of the federal forces. I am in great need of food and fodder, and I shall have to have some from this place. But I wish to assure you that neither I nor my men will do you any harm or take anything from you that we do not pay for."

The three looked frightened enough. The old lady began to stammer apologies for some remarks she had made to the scouts uncomplimentary to the Boers. But Danie laughed.

"Don't bother about that, madam," he said. "We are not fighting against women, nor do I expect an Englishwoman to be other than English."

Reassured by his words and manner, the old lady chirked up and smiled a feeble smile.

"I—er—you are welcome to whatever we have, sir," she quavered, "but, as I told the two—your men who were here before—we have almost nothing left. A few ricks of corn, a few cattle, a few sheep."

"Three or four of each of those items will be enough, thank you, ma'am," answered Danie, returning her smile.

He went himself with some of the men to see that the commando's wants were moderately supplied, and that no harm, besides the necessary slaughter of the animals turned over to him, was perpetrated. Then, accepting an invitation of his hostess, he and his officers entered the house for a meal less lately on the hoof.

During the entertainment he learned to his satisfaction that the village of Hopeton lay only five miles distant, and that its garrison, so far as the knowledge of the women went, consisted only of two troops of regular cavalry and one hundred volunteer militia, with a small

battery of light guns. He decided, after a brief consultation with his officers, to pass the rest of that night at the farm and to attack Hopeton at daybreak. A cordon was immediately stationed around the farmstead to see that the good women sent no information to the little village of their visitor's presence, while some scouts were sent out at once to reconnoitre in the direction of the town, and to visit the several farms in the neighborhood to obtain one or two colonial Boers to act as guides when the attack was made.

As the column moved westward to the attack through the last dead hour that precedes the dawn, the descending moon lay low in front of it. The intervening karreebossen threw a shadowy tracery of leaves in bewildering beauty over the faces and forms of the advancing horsemen. Rising high to each side of the moon, so that she seemed to lie a lake of living fire caught in the valley bowl that joined them, stood two sombre hills. These, said their guides, were the Twee Zusters; and behind them lay Hopeton. Borne on the sweet, early

breeze from their dark sides and from the mysterious night around, the dismal howls of the Maanhaar jackals, and, from time to time, more mournful shrieks than theirs, quivered across the veldt. Some of the men moved uneasily in their saddles. "Hear the 'weer' wolves," they murmured, and cast sidelong glances into the night. But they spoke only in whispers. The spell of night was upon them. The only other sounds that broke the stillness were the monotonous clatter of the iron-shod feet on the rough ground and the occasional snort, the infrequent stumble, of a horse.

As they approached the Twee Zusters, the first faint flushes of morning lighted the east. Danie brought his commando to a last halt between the two tall sister hills. The village lay beneath them in the plain, close around it the white tents of its guardians. Two small, dim mounds on little rises to right and left of the town and camp indicated the probable locations of the batteries.

Dawn now began to break in earnest. The purple cloaks of darkness that had wrapped

the hills during the night began to slip down their sides. The curtain of the night slowly lifted, and revealed the wide stage of nature, whereon man in the light of a new day was once more to make his bow and proceed with his part, mean or noble, degrading or ideal, as God should will or his own desires dictate.

Danie surveyed the scene before him, and quickly made up his mind how to act. At his orders the commando divided and filed out to right and left along the bases of the hills in two thin ribbons, to surround and close in upon the village with a grip of steel. One swift charge Danie hoped would accomplish his purpose. He knew from experience that the English, if given breathing-space, could be stubborn and troublesome to the last degree, but that sudden rushes in the early morning before "Tommy" had had his breakfast or even rubbed the sleep out of his eyes paralysed him with astonishment, and rendered him helpless with confusion and disgust.

Both camp and town slept calmly on, unsuspicious, unconscious of the danger that was al-

most upon them. The sentries of the home-guard of militia were frankly and sweetly slumbering in the lee of the green acacia hedges at the outskirts of the village, or in the edges of the vineyards where the famous Hanepoot and the swart Miskedell grapes grew along the banks of the little stream. Even the regular videttes of the cavalry sat their horses in the hollows with nodding heads and frequent glances toward the camp to which they were so soon to be withdrawn. The very aspect of the town itself, with its still and as yet smokeless houses, was one of the utmost peace and quiet. The shady streets, the restful flower gardens, the little park with its dark green hedgerows of microcaba, looked as if there were no such thing as war. Across the veldt, their circle narrowing with uncanny rapidity, the Boers were approaching to turn this little paradise into a bloody arena of strife. And only the old Dutch church seemed to take notice of their coming. It was with something like a guilty tug at his heart that Danie saw its tall, straight tower pointing finger-like toward heaven, as if

claiming God's attention, demanding His intervention in what was happening below.

The thunder of their horses' hoofs first awakened the perception of the nearest vidette. With white face and frightened eyes he shakily fired his carbine at the advancing line, and, turning his steed, dashed yelling toward the camp. But the unhappy neglecter of his duty did not get far. The single shot that signalled the final charge of the Boers passed through his perturbed heart. He rolled from his horse, and crashed to the ground just in time to be ridden over by the furious rush. A few feeble and harmless volleys from garrison and town, the short, sharp thunder of one three-pounder, the rattling speech of a machine gun, interrupted before the first half-dozen words were fairly out of its mouth, a few more scattering shots, and all was over. The only crew that had reached its gun in the little battery had been ridden down by sheer weight of horseflesh after the first discharge. Except for the guard of the regular camp, few of its occupants had even raised their rifles. The militia, almost to a

man, had awakened to a state of peace almost as deep as that in which they had slept. But they were prisoners of war.

A great shout of "Hoera voor die Boere!" rang out from the throats of the victorious Transvaalers. Their success was complete. At the slight cost of two men wounded they had captured over three hundred prisoners with horses and accoutrements to correspond, six small guns, and forage, provision, and loot unlimited. The enemy himself had lost but four men killed and a scant two dozen wounded. His chagrin was naturally in inverse proportion to his loss.

Danie Linde, conqueror in his own right, sat and took his ease in the office of the little hotel of Hopeton. Before him came the captured British officers. As the first one entered the door of the ground-floor apartment which served in the piping times of peace as office, bar-room, and parlour, but which now was raised to the dignity of an audience chamber, Danie sprang up from his chair in amazement.

"Campbell,—Captain Campbell!" he shouted, running forward with outstretched hands. "My old friend, my kind friend, how glad I am to see you! How glad I am it is you whom I have captured!"

"The devil you are!" cried the Englishman, clasping his hand warmly. "I am far from glad that I have been captured. But, if it had to happen, I had rather have had you do it than any other Boer I can think off. But how do you do, Linde? You are looking much better than when I saw you last," he said.

Danie laughed. "I am *feeling* very much better, thank you, than when we parted in the neutral camp at Ladysmith. It was not until after many weeks of the special consideration your kindness procured for me in the Pietermaritzburg prison-hospital that I really began to recover."

"I hardly believed that you had any chance of living after the frightful mauling you received at Dundee," responded Campbell, seriously. "But you certainly look remarkably healthy now. Perhaps," he added whimsically, "if I

had known what was going to happen to-day, I should have fired straighter two years ago at Dundee or arranged to have them make away with you at Pietermaritzburg."

"Fortune of war, Campbell," grinned Danie, "I am glad that I didn't tell you what I was going to do. But it is breakfast time; and, as I am afraid I slightly upset your own arrangements for that meal, I will make up for it by asking you to share mine with me."

"You killed the best cook that I have had so far in this war," answered the other, grimly; "and so I shall accept your invitation with pleasure."

Turning Major Campbell's subordinates over to the care of his own, Danie took his friend with him into the little dining-room, where a table supplied with what the house could afford was already laid for him. When they were nearly through with their meal, their friendly flow of conversation was interrupted by a series of loud explosions. The Englishman started up in his chair.

"Ha! what is that?" he cried.

Danie smiled calmly. "Be seated, Campbell," he answered. "I am sorry, but it is not yet the relief column come to help you out. My men are blowing up your pretty guns, because we cannot take them with us."

The other's face fell. "Good Lord!" he exclaimed. "I wonder what they will say to me! I may have to resign, and go home in disgrace. My beautiful guns!"

Danie tried to console him. "You couldn't help it, my dear Major," he said kindly. "I was bound to get you. It was what I started out to do."

Major Campbell smiled a dry smile. "That is poor consolation," he said. "What *I* started out to do was not to be caught napping. But excuse me for grumbling. I won't do so any more."

As they rose from the table, Danie held out his hand again to his prisoner.

"Now," he said, "I will tell you what I am going to do. I am going to march your men a number of miles north under guard, and turn them loose across the Orange River. I can't

kill them or keep them, and that will get them out of the way. I had intended to hold you and your officers prisoners, and to take you along with us," he smiled, "just to show you how the thing is done. But seeing that it is you, Campbell, I have softened my heart. I am going to release you, and with you all your officers, on condition that you give me your word to go straight to Cradock, and not to give any information about me in any way until you get there."

Campbell flushed gratefully. "You are very generous," he answered. "Nothing could be fairer. I formally accept your offer now for myself and my officers. But I shall ask your permission, however, to send a captain along with the men to take charge of them when your people leave them, and who will agree to keep them in order on the march."

"Certainly you may do so," answered Danie, heartily. "And it will be of great assistance. And now I have a favour to ask of you, similar to the one I asked of you two years ago at Ladysmith. I want very much to send a letter

to a lady who is now confined in the concentration camp at Pietermaritzburg. The letter will be purely personal, I assure you, and will contain nothing that your censors would not pass." He blushed. "Still, I should prefer that they did not open it. It is to the same lady to whom you promised to send word of me when we were at Ladysmith," he added hurriedly. "Do you still remember?"

"By Jove, I do remember," said Campbell. "I will gladly take charge of your letter, and I am sure that I can agree to forward it for you without its being opened. By the way, I think I have the man here whom I sent especially with a letter to the young lady's home about the time of your escape from Natal. As I was wounded again two days after I saw you last by a shell inside Ladysmith,—where, you know, I went when I left you,—I could not keep my promise for some months. But I remembered it; and, when I did write, I filled the letter with wonderful news concerning you and your recovery, which I got from the hospital officials, to compensate for the delay."

"You have the man here who went with the letter?" asked Danie, eagerly. "I should like to see him very much. Except the news that Miss Uys and her mother were in the Pietermaritzburg camp, which I received very lately, I have not heard one word from or of them since before the battle of Dundee. But I should be delighted to know that she, at least, had heard of me."

"By Jove," said Campbell, in amazement, "now who would believe it? Devilish hard luck, my boy! We will look the man up right away if you like."

Danie was more than willing; and the two officers left the hotel, and strode down the street to where Campbell's disconsolate khakis were seated or stood in groups in the middle of the green, surrounded and guarded by a cordon of many Boers, freshly mounted on great English cavalry horses and cheerfully fondling extra rifles and cartridge belts that had once been the property of the British government. Danie followed his friend as the English officer made his way through the crowd of prisoners, the men

jumping stiffly up to salute him as he passed. But his footsteps dragged a little and he put a detaining hand on Campbell's arm as he noticed that they were approaching a group of uniformed Kaffir police.

"I am sorry to see that you condescend to arm savages to fight against us," he said coldly. "It is against all the dictates of civilisation, and should not be permitted in civilised warfare. I emphatically repeat the protest that has already been made so many times by my higher officers."

Major Campbell's face flushed, and his voice betrayed his embarrassment. "I cannot refuse to command men who are placed under me," he replied lamely; "but, as a matter of fact, these police were armed only for defence, and served only in the home guard of the town. However, the man we want is among them."

Danie said no more, and moved toward the Kaffirs with the Englishman.

Major Campbell looked sharply over them as they rose from their seats upon the ground. "Kalaza!" he called.

A small, ugly native with beady eyes stepped forward, and saluted.

"Kalaza," the officer continued, "do you remember when I sent you with a letter to a farm in the Ermelo district just after the British troops had entered the Transvaal at Volksrust?"

"Yes, sir," answered the Kaffir, stolidly.

"Did you deliver it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you remember to whom you gave it?"

The little Kaffir looked the Englishman blandly in the eye. "I gave it to an old man with a long white beard, sir. There were three girls there who were surely his daughters"—

"Stop!" interrupted Danie. "What letter—what farm was this?"

"The name of the farm was Blaauwkop, and the name of the old man was Uys," answered the Kaffir, slowly, shifting his small eyes for a second to Danie's face, but dropping them immediately to the ground.

"There," began the major; but Danie did not listen. Seizing the man's arm in a hand like a vise, he drew him slowly toward him.

"You black villain," he said harshly, "I know you are lying! If you do not answer truly every question I put to you, I will first have you stripped of your uniform, out of a respect for it which those who put it on you never had, and then I will have one of my men bring his sjambok and cut your back slowly to pieces! Do not forget that you are absolutely in my power." He went on heedless of the startled major's protests at his energy of language. "Now," he said, "first, to what farm were you sent with the letter?"

The native shivered at the threat. "The name of the farm was Blaauwkop, baas," he answered, dropping instinctively into the use of the title he associated with those who had first taught him the fear of God.

"To whom did you deliver the letter?"

"To no one, baas."

The astonished major heard this revelation of iniquity, and all at once ceased his protest. Danie drew a long breath, and loosened his grip a little.

"Ah! that is better," he said at last. "Then you did not deliver the letter?"

"Yes, baas."

"Well, what did you do with it?" thundered the exasperated Boer.

"Oh, baas, do not be angry with me. The house was burning, and I laid it on the door-step."

Danie's face whitened. Suddenly all the details of the dreadful scene as related to him by old Maliwe rose, adjuring and vindictive ghosts, in his mind. He released his grip on the Kaffir's shoulder, and towered above him with nervous fingers. "Dog," he said in a terrible voice, "was it thou who slew the boy, the innocent?"

The trembling Kaffir sank to his knees on the ground with an ashen face. "No, baas, no, it was not I. I had but arrived to deliver the letter, and others drove away the family and slew the boy, burning the house. It was not I!"

"Tell me the truth, dog! Was it one in thy company?"

"Yes, baas," whimpered the Kaffir: "it was a policeman."

Danie seized him, and jerked him to his feet. "Look about," he commanded, "and see if he is here. If he is, point him out to me!"

The other licked his dry lips. "I dare not," he whispered. "He would kill me."

"Fear not," said Danie, grimly. "He will die first."

Slowly and silently the Kaffir turned and pointed his finger toward one of his fellows, a tall, burly black, who stood about ten paces off, regarding the little group with sullen and suspicious eyes.

Danie turned, and called to some of his own men who were standing talking to several of their prisoners on the edge of the green. They came running up. Major Campbell in his turn laid an anxious hand on his friend's arm.

"What are you going to do?" he asked quickly.

"Hang him within three minutes," answered Danie, briefly, "if he is the man. Come here, you!" he shouted, beckoning to the fellow.

The Kaffir moved slowly forward, his eye shifting between his captor and his accuser.

"What is your name?" demanded the Boer.

The man glanced at him. "Jim Kondwana," he answered sullenly.

Danie's eyes gleamed. "You killed a boy at Blaauwkop in Ermelo," he began.

But the Kaffir understood. With the spring of a lion he had driven his Judas to the ground face foremost, and, kneeling on his back, grasped his head with both hands and wrenched it backward with so fierce and quick a motion that it lay limply resting between the victim's shoulder blades, its fading eyes gazing straight at the sky above, before even a single shriek could issue from between its miserable lips. A dozen forms hurled themselves upon the murderer, a dozen arms seized him. But the deed was done.

Danie cleared a space through the crowd to the nearest tree. Behind him was borne the roaring Kaffir, struggling furiously, but futilely, in the hands of his Transvaal guardians. A rope was immediately procured, and within

a few short moments the wretch hung twitching from its end.

Leaving a guard at the tree, so that the body should not be interfered with, Danie walked silently back to the hotel to write his letter to Bettie. It was not without an almost savage thrill of joy that he concluded his tale with an account of the summary vengeance he had just executed upon the slayer of little Gert.

At noon his prisoners were marched out of Hopeton under guard on their way to the Orange Free State, while their officers were sent south toward Cradock, Major Campbell with the letter for Bettie in his pocket. In another hour the commando followed them out of the little town, and turned to the westward after it had crossed a few miles of the veldt.

But in the green square at Hopeton the body of Jim Kondwana swung dangling from its tree all that day, for no one dared to touch it. And all through the night the tree groaned and whispered to the winds that blew of the dreadful burden of its fruit.

CHAPTER VI.

THE wide waste in the southern part of the Cape Colony known as "The Ghouph," and the broad desert below it,—the "Great Karroo,"—are, except in the spring of the year, almost untraversable by man. At all other seasons a dismal scarcity of water secludes these regions from the paths and habitations of nearly all animals endowed with either reason or instinct. Even Nature herself appears to withdraw from the poisonous waste; for its only growths are the low karroobosje and a few other species of brush that gather together in dark patches on the face of the desert, as if for mutual protection. In the South African spring, for a short time during and after the rains,—which fall over this dark section of the continent but once a year,—these bushes luxuriate in bright green leaves and brilliant flowers, coloured like the rainbow. Then strange blossoms, bright and beautiful,—the gousblom, the angeliertje, etc.,—rise like fairies over night in the deep hollows (laagtes)

and river-beds, and fill the surrounding air with such sweetness that, with closed eyes, it is almost impossible for the traveller to believe that he is not in one of Nature's paradises.

But in a month, or two at the most, this illusion of beauty is transformed again into the likeness of a grave; and for the rest of the year the suffocating sun unintermittently parches and burns its surface; the streams and rivers disappear suddenly into the sand, leaving only a few rolled stones in uncertain gullies to indicate their past and future presences; the fresh winds from the sea, only sixty miles to the south, desert the dry barrens for fresher pastures; and all life once more avoids the flowerless, greenless waste. Only the railroad that cuts across its western end, shrinking beneath the shadow and protection of the Winter Berg, the desert's northern boundary, and the far, thin trails of smoke that sometimes show among the tops of the dim, blue mountains that entirely surround the Karroo and the Ghouph, mark the presence of life on or near their treacherous faces.

Keeping well to the westward, the invading commando passed along the spurs of the Zour Bergen, crossing and cutting the railroad just south of Naauw Port. They held their western course as far as Richmond, where Danie made a demonstration; but, finding that he could effect nothing, and that further delay might subject him to the dangerous attack of a large British column which was being rushed forward to intercept him, he turned suddenly south, and passed through the valley at Nels Poort into the Great Karroo.

The rainy season was still on, although it was now liable to come to an end with almost any week. At Nels Poort and in the valley south of the Winter Berg he removed and destroyed more than five miles of the telegraph, poles and all, cutting the wire into sections and transporting them and the poles back to Nels Poort, where with the little wooden station, the wire, the poles, and almost half a mile of the single railroad track, ties and irons, he built a beautiful bonfire to celebrate his devotion to his country.

Danie's intention was, after crossing the desert, to ride eastward along the narrow strip of coast that, with its fertile lands and many little towns, lay between the desert and the sea,—to ride perhaps as far as the Transkei. He would pick up the necessities, even the luxuries of life, including all the fresh horses he should require, along the way. He would cross the desert to Willowmore, then south to Uniondale, then east. Everything would lie open to him, the Unexpected. Port Elizabeth would lie in his path, and the other towns on Algoa Bay. Then Bathurst, Grahamstown, perhaps Port Alfred, and King William's Town and Alice, or East London, another railroad terminal on the coast. Then north along the Tsomo River through Barkly East, and back into the Orange Free State right at the border of Basuto Land. An enticing programme. He could be at home in the Transvaal before the winter set in. And who knew?—the English might withdraw even as many as ten thousand men from the two Republics to send against him. Why, he might have a thousand

men himself inside the month. The young Cape Colony Boers were fine fellows, and there were many of them. Their sympathies were strong and of the right kind; and they were ready, even anxious, to enlist with him. He had already added fifty of them to his commando. But, in any case, he felt sure his numbers as well as his successes would be tremendously magnified by the weakened and frightened people over whom he would gain the latter. So that, even if their exaggerations alone should suffice to draw southward in pursuit of him a respectable portion of the enemy's force, he would at least have freed his country and her ally of some of their burden, and could by so much be satisfied.

Thus ran the young leader's thoughts as he began his journey south across the desert. His commando was strong in numbers and in fine condition. During the three weeks that had passed since his capture of Hopeton he had replaced all his mounts (even his thirty extra horses) with fresh, strong animals, unworn by long war-service,—the very cream of the hun-

dreds he had had under his hand since he had been in the Cape Colony.

Although the desert still bloomed, the rains of the season were falling at longer and longer intervals. The streams were beginning to subside, and became more and more infrequent as the commando advanced. Danie judged it wiser to divide his force, and proceed in two parallel lines of march several miles apart, the two divisions to be rejoined at the southern boundary of the Great Karroo. He gave the command of the second division to his oldest lieutenant, Koos Nel, who had served him as veldt-cornet in the old Lydenburg commando at the time of its raid into Ermelo.

Toward the end of the third day, when the two commandos were nearing the hills that lay north of Willowmore and had begun to breathe the fresher, purer air of the mountains, Danie was suddenly notified by his advance scouts of the approach of a large British column from the direction of Willowmore and the railroad. His plans were for the time being completely upset. He halted his column, and sent mes-

sengers to Nel, warning him of the approach of the enemy and urging him to rejoin with his men at once. But Nel was miles away and out of sight; and long before he arrived, or could arrive, Danie was forced to move from his position, and take up a new one far to the south-west, among the Prince Albert mountains. At nightfall he had fixed his laager near the entrance of a small rocky valley between two spurs that ran out into the Karroo. These spurs were so precipitous that they were practically inaccessible from their outer sides, so that he felt comparatively safe for the night. But the men were worn and tired from their dusty, depressing march along the edge of the desert, into which they had suddenly been driven back just as they thought they had finished with its hardships for good and all.

The weary Boers occupied and, as well as they could, strengthened their new position while the sun was descending, a bloody ball, behind the western ranges. But between the crevice-like neks that split the jagged mountain tops its fiery rays still lighted the broad,

dusty flats into which the valley opened. And across these flats the pursuing English were spreading rapidly into a fanlike order of attack. Two small batteries, just out of sight behind the spurs that protected the valley, were already seeking the range of the laager with tentative shells, evidently corrected, to judge from the improvement in their fall, by observations made from the flats in the Boers' front.

To Danie's surprise, everything seemed to indicate that the English, not content with having cornered him, intended to attack him that evening. A large battalion of mounted infantry was being dismounted just out of range, and was very evidently preparing for immediate action, while cavalry skirmishers were already deploying in front of his position. The cannonade was becoming fast and furious, although as not yet destructive. He had sent his horses nearly a mile up the valley, and his men were experts in finding cover.

"There is not more than half an hour of daylight left," said Danie to himself as he

glanced up at the sky. "They are going to make their attack at once."

Hardly had the thought passed through his mind when the cavalry skirmishers disappeared toward the sides in the direction of the concealed batteries; and a long, thin line of men rose from among the thick bosjes behind them, and swept, silently converging, toward the mouth of the valley. When they had arrived within three hundred yards, the Boers opened a steady but irregular fire upon their ranks, and in a few moments the line wavered, halted, and broke, leaving a large number of dead and wounded where they fell. The Boer fire died down to a few scattered shots, and then all was silent. With the repulse of the infantry the artillery had suddenly ceased.

Danie walked up and down from group to group, laughing and joking.

"Well, boys, that must have made them pretty sick. If they are foolish enough to come again before dark, we will give them some more." He stopped before a little party of six who were engaged, behind a well-sheltered

and far-retired boulder, with a dirty, well-thumbed pack of cards and six glowing, comfortable pipes. "Here, you lazy kerels, bestir yourselves." He bent, and felt of the barrels of the rifles leaning up against the stone. They were cold. "You lazy devils have not fired a shot. But I will give you something to do. I can make you useful, even if you think you are too good to fight. Now you six get up, drop your cards, and make us all some hot coffee. See that every man gets his, and bring me mine last."

They grinned up at him, and rose to do his bidding. He went on.

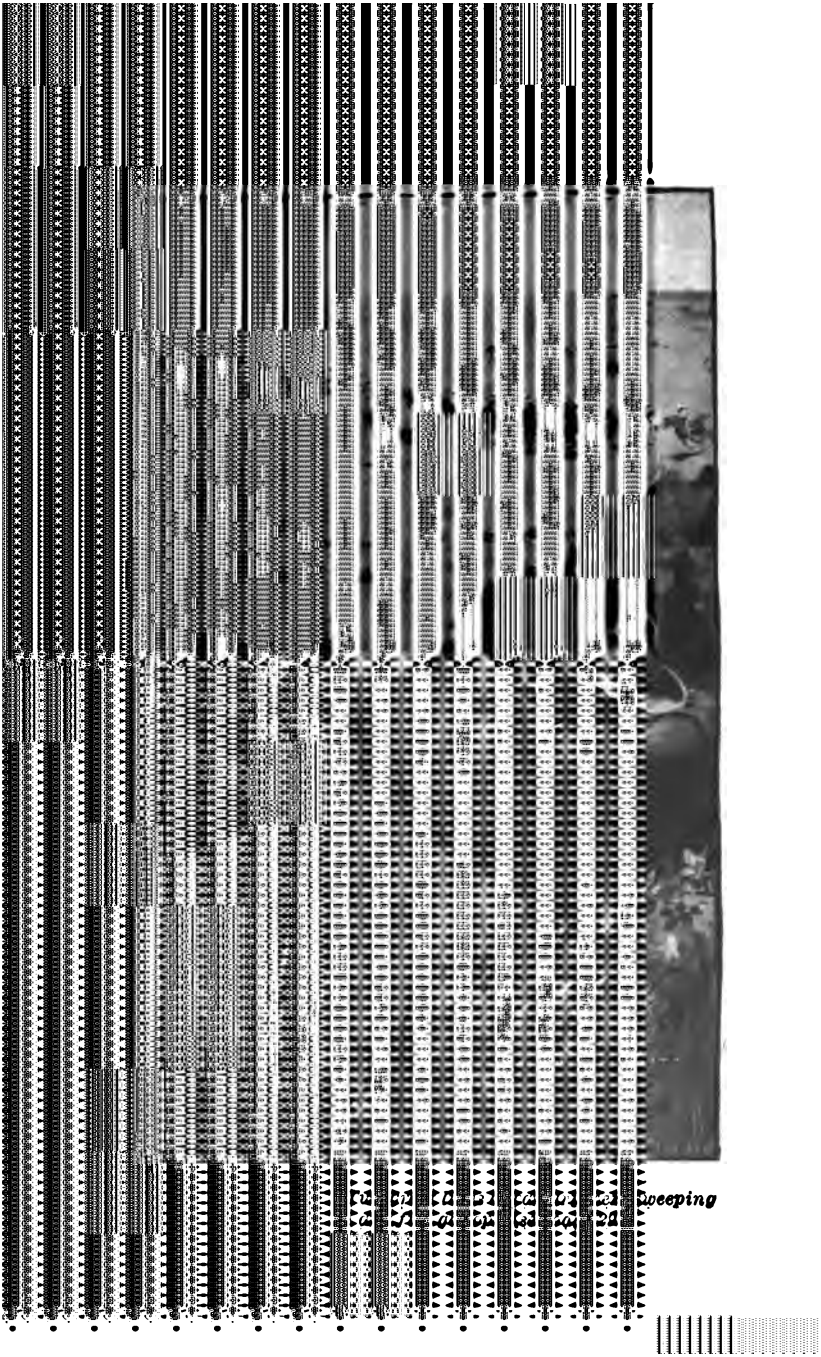
As he reached the extreme right of his line, the English guns suddenly reopened with terrific rapidity of service. The bursting shells covered the Boer position with smoke and dust: He turned, and ran back toward the centre of the little valley. Right ahead of him, still behind their boulder, the six card-players sat grouped about a new-made fire, engaged in preparing the coffee he had ordered. They were still laughing, and, as he could see, were pay-

ing no attention to the renewed shell-fire, apparently with the feeling that, as long as they were not in the fighting line, it concerned them nothing. As he was almost upon them, as he leaned his body to one side to avoid them in his run, he heard a fierce whir of infinitesimal shortness,—before his very eyes a great mass of fluffy, bright yellow cotton evolved from nothing directly above their heads,—it streaked and circled with red,—there was a tremendous crash! For the briefest fraction of a second he had a horrible vision of a world full of doubled and disjointed, of broken and contorted men, of dirt and dust and ashes and flaming brands, all suspended in a horrible golden haze. Then the world went black.

When he woke to consciousness, it seemed to him as if hours had passed. In reality it was but seconds. He was lying on his back, bent across the round top of the great boulder; his eyes smarted fearfully; his mouth was open, his tongue and throat dry and burning, except where at one of the corners a little stream was pouring into the hollow of his cheek. With

much care and as much pain he gradually sat up, to find, to his relief, that no bones were broken, and that his face was bloody from what was merely an unimportant scalp wound. He began to see, although his eyes still smarted fiercely. He slipped down from the boulder to fall in a helpless heap upon the ground, so unsteady were his joints. But he picked himself up, and looked around. His brain cleared itself of confusion, and recollection returned to him.

Where the fire had burned, a great gash was torn in the earth. At the bottom of the ragged hole a naked human fore arm, with the shattered bone of the elbow protruding from its upper end, lay amid some few charred sticks of wood, still clasping in its stiffened fingers a twisted iron ladle. Within a radius of twenty paces of the spot six torn and mangled bodies, almost unrecognisable as human earth, defiled the grass. The acrid fumes of the lyddite still hung heavily in the air. The corpses, the ground itself, his own hands as he looked at them, were tinged with its yellow. His ears



began to recover from the shock of the explosion; and the continuous thunder of the guns, the crashes of the bursting shells, once more conveyed their meaning to his mind. He remembered his errand, and ran on.

When he arrived at the middle of his position, he brushed the dirt and blood from his eyes, and looked out into the open at the entrance of the little valley. Two great lines of cavalry were sweeping in toward him at a full gallop. They had already reached the entrance of the dell, and were between the two cape-like spurs which projected into the desert. A strange feeling as if of the annihilation of time and space swept over him. He could have believed that he was again before Dundee, watching that last, fierce charge of the lancers that had ended by driving his little remnant from the ridge they had held so long, and in sending him into the valley of the shadow of death. As he had done on the day he remembered so strangely well, he now ran up and down behind his men, urging them, cheering them, cautioning them. But these men lost none of their steadiness.

The sight of the rapidly nearing, foaming, yelling line of horsemen, served only to make themselves cooler, their fire more murderous. Up to within one hundred yards the mad charge was led. Then the cavalry, as if by unanimous consent, broke and fled before the withering sheets of lead and steel they could no longer face. With their flight, as with that of the infantry which had preceded it, the spitting guns were hushed. And, as if it had been waiting for the action to end, the sun finally disappeared. Night had fallen at last.

In a short time the camp-fires of the English began to flicker out through the darkness on the desert. Danie lighted his own. He knew that his enemies believed that they had him finally penned, and that in all probability, taking a leaf from the Boers' own book, they would renew their attack with the dawn. He also knew that, although he had lost but the six men he himself had seen killed, he could not possibly hold out for many hours in the face of such overwhelming power. So he resorted to a page in that same book which the

English had not yet turned, and determined to circumvent them. He sent three of his ablest scouts to find their way over the hills and to the other division under Lieutenant Nel, who must have retired or been driven into the mountains a dozen miles to the east. To him they were to report Danie's position, and to state that within a few hours, if it were possible for man or beast to compass it, their commander would follow them through the hills to join him. Having despatched them on their desperate errand, Danie turned his attention to the commando, saw that the horses were fed and watered, that the dead were duly buried, the living heartened and made comfortable, and the position carefully guarded against a night surprise. Then, weakened as he was by the shock that had so nearly cost his life, and worn out with his exertions, he fell into a deep sleep.

Three hours later he began to withdraw his men quietly and in small sections up the valley. He appointed a small guard to remain at the laager for an hour after his departure to

keep the fires well fed, and to leave them at last in such condition that they would burn fairly evenly until morning. By midnight the commando had crossed the ridge of the hills behind the valley, and was making its way eastward on the other side of the slope as fast as the darkness would allow. His evasion had been so silently, so skilfully conducted that no suspicion of it disturbed the English until his laager was discovered empty and cold at dawn, at which time Danie, having rejoined his lieutenant, was trekking westward again across the Great Karroo ten miles in rear of the camp of his attackers.

The game was stolen away: they could not even find its spoor; and the pursuit was not renewed until several days had given the commando full opportunity to recuperate after its hard fight and its long, wearing march.

CHAPTER VII.

IN the great hills south of Prince Albert—the mountains that separate the Karroo from the Olifant's River valley below—lies, almost between the topmost peaks, a cup-shaped depression in the ridge, a green little dale down whose sides trickle the rivulets which, combining on the southern slope, form the source of one of the Olifant's minor tributaries. To this secluded harbourage the Transvaal commando of Danie Linde was led, and here it rested for ten days undisturbed. Its commander, who had suffered more by the explosion of the shell than he had cared to acknowledge or even to believe, had succumbed to a general collapse and a rising fever immediately upon his arrival at a place of comparative safety. His faithful lieutenant, Nel, had discovered a high mountain farm lying just outside of the valley at the side of the infant stream. His reckless inquiries had fortunately developed the fact that it belonged to a Cape Colony Boer named Van Niekerk, who, though fearing openly to express

his sympathies, was a thorough rebel at heart. To this farm he transported Danie, taking charge himself of the commando and arranging for the most careful guard to be kept over their as yet unsuspected retreat.

Danie's needs were, like those of the commando itself, better salved by the period of complete rest and quiet than they could have been by any of the medicaments of man. Ease and sleep and good food and day-dreaming at the white clouds that sailed overhead during the long afternoons did as much for him as the tender nursing of the women of the household. At the end of a week he felt himself again. His jaded horses, after seven days of peaceful grazing on the rich green carpet of the slopes, were once more in condition. The men had recovered their spirits. He had, to their fullest extent, regained his own; and he felt that it was time for him to be up and doing. But his officers, affectionately solicitous, persuaded him to remain three days longer in the restful comfort of the Van Niekerk home. He consented.

Once again, notwithstanding his reverse and his enforced retreat westward, he began to lay his plans for a long raid up the easterly coast. He spent many hours looking south toward Oudtshoorn, ten miles away, where the railroad curved up from the coast into the valley of the Olifant. He thought at first of making his descent from the mountains in that direction, but his friendly hosts dissuaded him. Oudtshoorn, they said, was well garrisoned,—chiefly in his honour,—and other bodies of troops were known to be stationed in the valley and along the railroad. He realised that, once in the narrow valley of the Olifant, escape would prove almost impossible, should he be attacked in force; that, once across the railroad and the river, absolute success would have to attend his battles, or he would be subject either to capture or to annihilation. He finally and reluctantly decided that the safer, if not the only, chance of winning his way to the south-eastern coast lay in once more tempting the Karroo flats,—where he would have ample space in which to fight or to run,—and in retracing

his steps toward Willowmore, where he could resume his originally projected but interrupted line of march. So on the eleventh day the commando broke its comfortable camp, and trekked out of its refuge through the same pass by which it had entered.

The morning had broken wild and uncertain. Slate-blue clouds, mingling near the horizon with others of a darker, angrier tint, covered the sky. A sharp, gusty wind from the south-east drove these clouds unevenly before it, like flocks of frightened sheep, across the heavens. Occasionally through the gaps in the struggling herd the fitful sun gleamed forth, as if with but one eye, illumining the ragged cliffs of the mountain side, the green sweeps of the outstanding ridges, and the dry desert beyond with irregular blotches of a pale and sickly yellow. About mid-afternoon they re-entered the wide expanse of the Great Karroo. The wind slackened, and within an hour died completely down. Far to the south behind them rose an occasional murmur of thunder, like the distant ruffle of many drums.

It grew darker and darker, and the thunder increased. Soon big drops of rain began to fall, and the wind rose again, driving these, intermingled with hail-stones, mercilessly into the face of man and beast. But the darkness was so intense that the men were obliged to disregard this inconvenience, and to keep their faces uplifted, their eyes open, in order to avoid breaking the line or losing touch with their comrades. The thunder now became continuous and terrific. An unbroken sheet of rain and hail streamed almost horizontally across the plain from the cold south. Danie made a desperate attempt to turn back to the shelter of the hills the commando had left scarcely an hour before. The horses, however, could not be brought to face the storm of ice and water. Indeed, it was almost more than human flesh and blood could stand. So he was compelled to give it up, and keep to his northerly course into the waste.

Suddenly the furious thunder ceased, the wind broke, the bitter stream of sleet shook, flapped like a sail in the wind, and fell drizzling

to the ground. The sky lifted and lightened. Everything was hushed. It seemed as if Nature, ashamed at lashing with the tempest of her rage so mean, so helpless, so unresisting a creature as man, had on a sudden impulse withdrawn to her chamber, her silent spaces, and left her elements to steal or sneak away as best they might according to their kinds. But she had not laid aside her tools. She was but taking breath for a final effort, preparing an exhibition of her weirdest might, equipping to eclipse all her previous performance. From the very bosom of the mountains out of which the commando itself had but lately emerged, a cloud of the colour of ashes and funnel-shaped arose. Swaying gently, as if in the remnant of the retiring wind, it pirouetted for a few moments like a dancer on one toe, and then swept down the mountain side, whirling, roaring, yet still dancing daintily. The very air seemed to give way before it. As it approached, it could be seen that its dance steps were monstrous leaps and bounds of at times hundreds of feet in length. Wherever it touched or came

near to the ground, it sucked up or hurled afar rocks, sand, bushes. Within its enormous cup dreadful lightnings played, and great trees and boulders were tossed from side to side and up into the air, like balls in a hollow jet of water. Around its base great circles of material torn from the surface of the earth revolved in ever-rising spirals, melting into the towering horror above when they had climbed the dizzy height of its stem. It swayed and swung in its course like a giant flower; it pitched erratically like an ill-flown kite. Every now and then it shook the lightnings from its bowl in its tortuous convulsions, and they darted to the ground at its foot like escaped serpents, splashing wide fire where they struck.

The men, terrified beyond measure at so dire, so menacing a manifestation, crowded together in fear and disorder. When it was almost upon them, they lost all sense of organisation or direction, and, scarcely able to manage their snorting, plunging, sweating horses, broke into maddened flight before it. But it was too late, if, indeed, escape had at any

time been possible. The Thing leaped at their mass. They were immediately enveloped in a Stygian night of dust and sand and stones. They were beaten with flying solids, balls of blue electric fire burst and blazed and spattered in their midst.

It was all over in a moment. Through the dense wall of rain that followed it behind, those who were still standing or mounted could scarcely see it as it bounded off into the darkness of the desert.

Danie had escaped all injury. His horse, plunging and struggling in the black confusion, had thrown him heavily; but he had retained his hold on the bridle, and, as the agitated air cleared, prepared to remount. The poor brute, however, which was shaking in every foam-covered limb, sank to its haunches as he placed his foot in the stirrup. He tried to pull it up; but three times the miserable animal fell helplessly back, and finally rolled over on its side into the sand. Danie gave it up, and ran toward the nearest group of men. His adjutant, Redelinghuis, was one of them.

"Where is Lieutenant Nel?" Danie demanded. "Are you all here? Ride and collect the men, Redelinghuis. My horse is dead. Oh, the poor fellows! Oh, it was dreadful!"

The young adjutant rode off, swaying dizzily in his saddle.

The commando was slowly gathered together, some of its number on foot. Of the score of its members who were found senseless on the ground, six still lay stark with marble faces, whom neither the cold rain nor their comrades' frantic efforts could ever awaken. Nine horses were dead, as many disappeared.

The burial of the six took place at once according to command. Their common grave was dug with knives and trenching-tools almost where they fell, and the soft earth laid over them was covered with protecting stones. Then the commando rode away from the dreadful spot with heavy hearts.

Danie's own grief was intense. The loss of six brave men in so strange and unnatural a fashion seemed to him infinitely more deplorable than even a greater sacrifice in battle. He

could not help thinking that it was an ill happening with which to recommence his march to the coast, an evil omen. He remembered with an additional sinking at his heart the bloody glow that overlay the Orange River at his crossing, and how deeply it had impressed a drear significance upon his mind. He remembered how mischance uncalculated had met him, to prevent his passage to the coast, in the very valley toward which, under even more dismal auspices, he was now heading for the second time. He cursed himself for a superstitious fool, and tried to remember his success at Hopeton, his line of little conquests the other side of the desert, the gallantry of his men, and the spirit with which they had followed him the many hundred miles of their march of invasion.

Ah! but how about that spirit now? The thought roused him from his gloom, and he rode back along the line. He recognised with a shock that he was not alone in his dark mood. The men were not grumbling in their usual jovial discontent: they were sullen and silent.

Some—though none of those from his old commando—even gazed at him with unmantled ill-will as he passed them, as if he were to blame for their misfortune and discomfort. He stopped, and spoke cheerily to these, weighing his words; but he saw no immediate good come of it. They listened to him with downcast eyes in silence. He began to fear that half the commando would refuse to follow him if he tried to lead them further south. Almost in despair he cantered back to the head of the column.

The expedition was now once more on the fringe of the desert, where suddenly outcropping ridges, irregular ravines, and separated kopjes marked the close approaches of the mountain chain. Half recognising the place as one featured like and in all probability not far removed from the scene of his last encounter with the enemy, Danie gazed dully about him. The vanguard of scouts, riding some hundred yards ahead, had led the commando into a little valley, almost a ravine, that formed the natural passage between two steep hillocks. Danie

looked up at the bush-covered slopes of the kopje to his left.

He looked up at the bush-covered slopes of the kopje to the left. His mechanical hands reined his horse to a halt. The head of the column passed him, went unsuspiciously on. His eyes were fixed. They were fixed on the face of a man in khaki who was looking along the barrel of a levelled rifle. Beside that man lay another partly concealed in the bush, and beside him still another. Danie's blood froze in his veins. This, then, was the end. With a tremendous, almost a physical effort he recovered his voice, at the same time forcing his horse round toward the rear of the column and driving the spurs into its flanks.

"Ambush!" he shouted hoarsely. "Forward! Ambush!"

The words were hardly out of his mouth, the startled Boers in the vicinity had not taken in their meaning,—were still gazing in astonishment at their excited commander,—when two sheets of flame burst from the opposing hillsides, a thunderous volley rang out, and

the whole line was thrown into helpless but destructive confusion. There was no thought of resistance. Heedless, careless of the dead and wounded who fell with screams and clutchings or with uplifted hands and white, convulsed faces beneath the feet of the plunging, frantic horses, the column broke near its centre and dashed in a wild flight for safety in two directions, one half turning backward to retrace the road they had come, the others flying wildly straight ahead in the direction of their march. Danie's horse, struck to the heart, crashed to the ground. Its rider extricated himself by a fortunate movement, and leaped to his feet. He seized the offered stirrup of the last man in the forward flight, and half ran, was half dragged out of the ravine into the open beyond. But the English were there also. Mounted troopers were galloping about, shooting and cutting down the demoralised and scattered Boers, who were fleeing toward every point in the compass.

Danie's companion and saviour, a young Cape Colony Afrikander, Marè by name, sprang

from his horse the better to escape among the bush and long grass. Even as he did so, the animal, still in a full run, was struck and fell, rolling over and over like a shot rabbit with the impetus of its rapid motion. Danie and Marè plunged over the rocks and the bushes to the brow of a little descent, down which they ran to hide in the thick grass and bush at the bottom of a kloof with high, wooded krantzes at either side. As they ran into their concealment, Marè fell heavily, shot through the abdomen. Danie stopped, and, seizing him under the arms, lifted and dragged him fifty yards further into better cover, where he fell himself, wounded through the thigh by a chance shot fired at the swaying foliage. They lay silent, covering themselves with the long grass and under-bushes as well as they could.

The English had killed or captured almost all the Boers who had not escaped to a distance by breaking through their lines. But they were still beating the bush and firing scattering shots at real or imaginary fugitives and at suspected places of concealment. The

dozen scouts of the Boer advance-guard had taken up a position on a stony ridge, and opened fire upon the ambushed enemy as soon as they had discovered what was taking place. But they had been almost immediately surrounded, and forced to surrender in a body. Theirs were the only shots fired by the Boer commando that day against the English. The surprise had been complete.

Danie and his single companion lay at the bottom of the thickly grown canyon. The British soldiers who had seen them go in were firing at random from the rocks on either side into the jungle below, and were rolling heavy stones down wherever they thought the two men might be hiding. Tired of this resultless work at last, they began to call to the fugitives to come out, or they would set fire to the grass and burn them out. Their threats were emphasised with dire oaths and insulting epithets.

Danie's thigh wound had been bleeding freely, and was paining him a good deal. But Marè's eyes were closed, and his face and lips were

ashen. His breath was coming quick and short. His hands, already thin and white, twitched nervously from time to time. Danie turned, and took one of the white hands in his.

"What shall we do?" he whispered. "If we stay here, and they set fire to the grass, we shall burn to death. If we rise,—and we are both badly wounded,—they will probably shoot us."

The boy—for he was but eighteen—feebly pressed his commander's hand, and answered firmly, but in short gasps and with great difficulty:—

"I am dying in agony now, Commandant. Do not trouble about me. Save yourself. If I burn to death or die this way, it matters little. Let the flames destroy my body: it will be better. They might identify me, and visit my crime on my poor father and mother. Besides, it would please the dogs to know they had killed another rebel."

Danie painfully hitched himself a little nearer to the dying Marè, and laid his hand gently on the boy's chilled forehead, already damp

with death. He suddenly remembered his field-flask, and, taking it out, moistened the other's lips with a little brandy and water. The tears came to his eyes.

"Poor, dear boy," he said feelingly, "it is on my account —to save my life—that you are dying. If you had not stopped to offer me your stirrup in the nek, you might have escaped with the others. I will stay with you, and die with you. Do not be afraid."

Marè could no longer speak, but he half opened his eyes and smiled. Then his soul passed from him.

A voice called out from the far side of the kloof: "Well, Sergeant, set fire to the grass, and let 'em burn if they won't come out. But they are probably dead now, if they ever went in there."

"So," thought Danie, raising his head, "they are not quite sure, after all, that any one is here."

He fell back beside the dead man, and stared up at the sky, for the time being resigned, even anxious for his fate, yet listening with all his

ears for the first crackle of the flames. The past, the present, the possible future, moved swiftly in parade before his mind. He could see in the first place that his plans had failed, that he could no longer attempt to carry out his plan of moving to and up the coast. The effect of this new disaster upon the commando, —if, indeed, there was any commando left,— added to that of the storm and fight, the retreat that preceded it, would of itself put an end to the plan.

What had he done? He had taken Hopeton, beaten the enemy at Springfontein, captured and killed a few Englishmen, taken a few horses and supplies, and lost his commando, the best equipped, the finest that the Transvaal had ever sent across its borders. He had better die. His death alone would wipe out the disgrace of his failure. Besides, he owed it to young Marè who had so bravely passed through the gates before him, who was already standing on the other side of the dark river waiting for his commander, with all those others (and how many they now must be!)

who had left the ranks of the commando to join the countless host of the dead. They would be waiting for him, not accusingly, but with friendly and familiar hands outstretched to welcome him back to their midst.

Then he thought of Bettie, and his heart smote him. But, after all, what had he now to offer her? He saw clearly that not only he had failed, but that the cause for which he was fighting was doomed. And, as he thought it over, he decided that that fact in itself was cause and warrant for his extinction. He closed his eyes, and waited. The wait grew long. He opened them again to notice a red glow on the darkened sky, for it was already evening. A faint whiff of smoke blew past him, then another. It was coming.

He closed his eyes again. He wished it to surprise him. He did not have to watch its slow—or swift—approach. Strange to tell, his mind stole imperceptibly back from a horrid contemplation of his death to its old musings. The truth was, the loss of blood had so weakened him that he could hardly distinguish be-

tween the imminent future and the past, between the present of which he was a part and the dreams that were but a part of himself.

His mind was wandering aimlessly through a forest of unreal visions and conjectures, when it come all at once upon a clearing. For he waked with the sudden thought that perhaps he had no right to die. The newness of the idea surprised him into a consideration of its worth. And, as he thought it over in his freshened mind, he found all the arguments against him. His debt to the living was greater than that he owed the dead; he should be the last rather than the first to desert his country's cause; Bettie loved him for himself, not for his fame,—she had accepted him long before the war, he could go back to her, if no greater, at least no less a man, and find her unchanged and satisfied. Failure was not disgraceful, however bitter it tasted, to the man who had really tried; and there came always the opportunity to try again. He roused himself more and more with such thoughts as these, and suddenly, to his astonishment, he found himself

sitting up and staring straight at the advancing line of fire.

Had it not been for the fierce torrents of rain that had fallen early that afternoon, Danie would already have been overwhelmed. Even as it was, the hot desert sun had so dried the grass and bush that, once fairly started, the flames swept onward only moderately hindered by the little moisture that remained above the ground. His saner reason having told him that his duty was still to escape, if possible, Danie looked about him for a way to do so. The fire, fanned by the evening breeze, was working its way more and more rapidly down the kloof directly toward him. He struggled to his hands and knees, and aimed his course diagonally across the kloof and away from the fire. His progress was both slow and painful. Thick clouds of black smoke began to fill the air about him. Sparks began to fly over his head, to settle smouldering in front of him, starting new fires in his path; and he had to avoid these as well as the stones and bushes over which he could not step or climb. The

flames gained on him. Great waves of heat swept over him, almost scorching in their intensity. With the willingness to prolong life had come the desire, and to the hope had succeeded a great fear lest he should fail even in that. He prayed as he had never prayed before, fiercely, almost imperatively. He felt that God, having warned him through his conscience that his duty was to live, should see to it that he did live. But he also began to feel a fear that God did not hear or was not listening to his prayers, that he had been forgotten.

Just as the heat became intolerable, just as he began absolutely to despair, he passed around a great rock on which the lichens were already curling and browning, and found on its other side a little stream issuing from beneath it and flowing away into the dense thicket. He splashed lengthwise into it, and rolled over, burying his face in its cool waters. Then with a roar the hungry flames leaped over him.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN the clear light of the early morning two men stood talking earnestly on a little plateau from which, with the exception of two points of interest, the whole battle, or rather slaughter field, of the day before could be seen. The two places which their eyes or the glass of which they made anxious use could not search were the nek in which, between the two hills, the ambush had been laid and the kloof in which the last death had been done, the final outrage perpetrated. The two kopjes, between them the fatal nek, lay in line half a mile to the front of the observers. The kloof opened almost at their feet. The nearer kopje concealed the nek: a fringe of bush along the edge of the nearer krantz, which ran parallel to their left a few yards distant, hid the gulf of the kloof from their view.

In a klip scheur, or crevice, in the side of the kloof close to the top of the krantz, a man —who looked more like a scarecrow—was crouching in concealment, not forty feet from

the two horsemen on the plateau. He, too, was evincing great anxiety and interest; but to gratify his desires, to gain whatever knowledge or information he might be seeking, he was compelled to depend alone on the sense of hearing. For to see he must risk being seen; and he dared not as yet show himself. The rather restrained tones of the two men who talked carried clearly enough through the silence; but the man who listened, although he could hear the sound of the voices well enough, could not for all his earnestness distinguish to his satisfaction even the language in which they spoke.

The taller horseman, who had once more been passing his glass over every possible foot of the wide plain before him,—over the already half-eaten and noisome carcasses of the horses,—contemplatively over the long trench near the foot of the kopjes, which had been reopened for the examination of its gruesome contents scarcely an hour before,—slipped it into its case with a sigh.

"Well, Jan," he said, "it is no use. Williamson must have been deceived last night.

They either lied to him or the men he spoke to did not know. Let us go back."

The other man rose in his stirrups. "Wait a little, Lieutenant," he said. "Here is the kloof Davel spoke of,—the one that was burned out." And he rode his horse to its edge, and dismounted.

"Ons kan hier afklim" (We can climb down here), he called.

The man under the edge of the krantz started. He seized a bush growing directly over his head, and half pulled himself up to the plateau. Leaning far out, he fixed his eyes on the dismounted man, who had begun to climb down into the kloof some twenty yards away.

"It is not possible," he muttered to himself. "I must see the other." And he pulled himself up again until his head reached over the edge of the plateau. His awkward movement started a few stones rattling down the side of the kloof. Both the other men turned in his direction, but the fringe of bushes along the krantz yet protected him from the sight of the one who had remained on horseback. The

other, now on a level with the ragged and reckless watcher, stared at him for a moment in open-mouthed amazement. Then he suddenly scrambled back to the plateau.

"Goede Hemel, daar is die Kommandant!" he shouted, and ran down the edge of the cliff to help him up. The mounted man leaped from his horse, and hastened after his companion.

"Jan Kock! and Nel! Koos Nel! How glad I am to see you!" stammered Danie, his voice quivering with cold and with emotion as they drew him gently to the level of the plain and laid him tenderly on the short grass.

He was black from head to foot with smoke and grime, his clothes were charred and torn, his hair and beard singed and matted. But his wound—a clean flesh wound through his thigh, which had chipped, but not broken the bone—was in better condition than he had expected or dreamed. He had managed to bind it roughly during the night; and the stream, in which he had cooled its fever until morning, had served him well as a cold compress and

febrifuge. He had been able at dawn to drag himself across the blackened kloof and up its precipitous wall without much difficulty. There had been no spreading bush, no tangled grass, left to impede his progress. At the sound of the voices he had concealed himself in the crevice of the cliff, until he should be able to discover whether their owners were friends or foemen.

"Danie, Danie," cried Nel, as he bent over him, "we thought we had surely lost you! After we got the remnant of the commando together,"—Danie winced at the words,—"and could not find you among them, we did everything! Jan and I have been here since the English drew off to pursue us, looking for you or your body. We had all the poor dead out of their graves, and then reburied them. The khakis had just thrown a little sand on top of them. Williamson even went back to the English camp to see if he could see or hear of you. But he heard nothing, and they nearly suspected him for all his clever lies. What a time! And here you are at last, thank God,

safe and fairly sound. Bring my horse here, Jan. We must get him right away."

"Tell me," said Danie, "tell me first, dear Koos, how many men there are left. How many"—he hesitated at the words.

"There were one hundred and eighty-one, including yourself, who were not there when I called the roll early this morning," answered Lieutenant Nel, mournfully. "But some of them were taken prisoners, I know. And we have nearly twenty wounded men with us now. Oh, we are in bad shape! But never so bad that we might not be worse," he added, as he saw the pallor grow on Danie's cheek.

"No, no, Koos," said his commander, "we can do no more. If God permits us, we must get back to the Transvaal as soon as we can, without looking for any more fighting. The men will not follow any further, and you will see that all our new recruits will leave us and go back to their homes. I saw the commando's temper yesterday on the march after the storm, and I know. Confess it yourself. How do they seem to feel now?"

"Well," Nel replied with a little embarrassment, "their spirit is not what it used to be. There was talk this morning about surrender as well as about going home. Men like Jan here would follow you to hell, and you know I will always be with you; but we are a small minority. Now that is enough, old fellow. Let us lift you to the horse. We have a couple of miles to go before we reach the commando, and the English may find us at any hour."

"Let us go," said Danie, sadly. And they disappeared among the little kopjes toward the mountains.

The laager of the depleted and despondent commando was in as secret a place as could be found in the outer borders of the range it knew so well. Here Lieutenant Nel had gathered the men, as soon as he had succeeded in throwing the English off the track of the remnant that escaped with him; and here the two or three score of burghers who had fled separately into the mountains had easily found their way by means of secret signals and the scouts sent out to search for them. The great

joy in the little laager at seeing Danie again was not to be mistaken. But the men's joy, their enthusiasm, neither deceived their commander nor themselves. Their old spirit was gone. They were like rats in a closed room, with the dogs barking and howling at the door for luck to let them in; and they knew it only too well. Reduced to a bare third of their original strength, their captain wounded and sick, their horses almost completely knocked up, their stomachs empty and abused, their enemies gathering from every side against them, fresh, strong, in overpowering force, what was to be their fate? What could it be but one? And yet these men, knowing better than their enemies their own weakness and their opponent's preponderance in power, knowing that the north was barred against them with bars as impassable as those which closed the south to them, or the east or the west, would have marched gayly out into the desert that same day, ready and willing to cut their way back through the Colony, through the Free State, back to their home, their beloved Transvaal,

had their captain given them the word. Or, in the attempt, they would have died at his command, his beck.

But however much he meant to lead them homeward, whatever his mind was for the morrow, it was not to be. That very night he was placed on a horse and strapped to the saddle; and, buoyed between two faithful attendants, he led the van westward along the gloomy track they had twice traversed, while more than half the commando was engaged throughout the night in a series of desperate rear-guard actions, trying to hold the ever-increasing pursuit at bay.

For nearly two days Danie rode as if in a dream. The alternately following columns of the English never slackened in the pursuit. The only rest that the Boers could get was when in desperation they dropped behind some randt, set their backs against some wall, and one-half fought madly to stand off the enemy, while the other half slept and the worn-out horses were ungirthed for a few hours of such poor ease as they could find.

In forty-eight hours the strain became terrific. Men and horses dropped at every mile. Small English columns were crawling up on the Boer flanks. Directly in front of the commando lay the Capetown railroad, heavily fortified and guarded. Danie's little force—now numbering less than a hundred men—was being driven right against the line at Maatjesfontein. One more hopeless dash, one last fight, and it was all over. The wounded leader called up every reserve of his powers as he approached the railroad. His gaunt face was deeply flushed, his sunken eyes gleamed with an unnatural light. He took back the command from Nel, who had held it for him during the last two dreadful days.

"Give it to me," he said, "and tell the men that I myself will lead them. It will not be long. We shall either break through—or we shall not. In any case it will be my last fight,—at least for some time,—and fight it myself I will!"

The men, nerved by despair, cheered him to the echo in the midst of the British bullets as

he rode alone to the head of their column with his old careless smile. He nodded and threw his felt hat to the ground, riding bare-headed up and down the line.

"There is no way to do it but to do it!" he repeated again and again. "We must get through—or die. But kill as many khakis as possible. Make them pay dear for the three hundred who lie buried in the desert, who will never again see their homes, their wives, their children. Think of your own, and try to return to them. There lies the road,"—he pointed ahead,—"I will lead you to it. *Come!*"

There was indeed no alternative. The little commando hurled itself, yelling, against the defences of the railroad only to recoil, dazed and shattered, from the rain of steel that the heavy line of infantry, aided by Maxims, poured forth straight into its face. Once again the thinned and broken column rode at the embankment, its mad, indomitable leader carrying his little remnant right up to the muzzles of the rifles. And then, alas! the end really came. There was none to lead, there were none to

follow, for a third charge. But twenty-seven men remained unwounded when Danie crashed to the ground, his horse riddled with steel. To save themselves from murder, they threw up their hands. It was a brave surrender.

Danie was stunned by the fall, and was spared the sight of the surrender, which, after all, might well have cheered his poor heart, as far as the knowledge that his men were not all to die that day could do so. When he came to himself, he found a number of very peaceful-looking English soldiers engaged in lifting his dead horse from off one of his legs, which, he was aware, was giving him intense agony. He saw, dimly, a couple of English officers standing over him. He could not see as far as to their faces, which seemed a great distance off. But he did not fail to understand that he was in the hands of his enemies for the second time, and, he feared, forever. Then he calmly closed his eyes, and fainted away.

CHAPTER IX.

TWO weeks later the kindly surgeon came one morning to the side of Danie's cot in the hospital at Maatjesfontein. He felt of his patient's pulse, took his temperature, replaced the bandages about his fast healing wound, and examined the splints which bound his broken leg. Then he sent for a pair of crutches, and ordered that the prisoner be assisted to rise and dress.

Danie opened his eyes in astonishment. "Why, I cannot walk, doctor. Am I to be sent away?" he asked.

"Not far," answered the surgeon, reassuringly. "Just across the square to the court-house. The court-martial will sit in an hour to try you."

"Court-martial? Try me?" gasped Danie. "Why, I am a prisoner of war. What have I to do with a court-martial, what has a court-martial to do with me?"

"That you must know best yourself, Mr. Linde. You have undoubtedly been informed

of the charges against you. I cannot, of course, discuss the matter with you." And he walked away.

Danie was stupefied. "What have I done that I should be tried by court-martial? What have they against me?" he asked again, as he was being dressed, of the old soldier who served as hospital attendant.

"Hi'm sure I don't know, sir," replied the man, looking cautiously around to make sure that he was not overheard. Danie's patience and his gratitude for ordinary kindnesses during his two weeks' confinement in the hospital had touched his attendant's heart. "Hi understand they 'ave a lot of charges against you. Probably like those that were brought against your Commandant Scheepers."

"Scheepers?" exclaimed Danie. "Scheepers? I know him well. Was he captured and tried by court-martial? What did they do to him? Did they send him into exile?"

"No, sir," answered the attendant, in a low voice. "They found 'im guilty of hall sorts o' things, and shot 'im."

Danie's heart sank into his boots. "*Shot him?*" he repeated hoarsely. "My God! What did they shoot him for? Tell me what you know about it!"

"W'y, sir," said the man, "they captured 'im when 'e was sick with a fever, and tried 'im within a week. They 'ad to carry 'im both before the court-martial and to the grave. The two men who was to 'old 'im up refuses to stand in front of the bullets, and small blame to 'em, says I. Nor I wouldn't 'a' done it, neither. So they sets 'im in a chire with 'is eyes tied up. Hi wasn't there, but I 'eard that 'e hasked to be allowed to stand be'ind the chire and 'old on to it, and to 'ave his eyes unbandaged. But they wouldn't let 'im. Hand so 'e died."

A cheerful outlook, thought Danie. He asked no more questions.

Before the hour had passed, he was escorted by an armed guard across the square to the building in which the court-martial was to hold its session. He entered the room leaning heavily on the shoulders of two of his guards,

and was allowed to sit down. The court was opened with all due form and ceremony.

"Mr. Linde," began the colonel who presided over the proceedings.

Danie straightened in his chair. "I have a military title," he interrupted, "as I hold a military commission regularly issued by my government. I beg to be addressed by it."

The colonel frowned slightly. "Commandant Linde, then," he began once more. "There are thirteen charges against you in the indictment presented before this court. They"—

Danie interrupted again. "I have heard nothing about them," he said. "I understand that according to all military law I should have seen them some time ago."

The colonel coughed. "They were sent you, sir, as soon as they were made up, to assist you in preparing your defence. If you have not received them, that is your misfortune, and not the fault of the court. The indictment will be read to you, however, and you will have the opportunity of hearing the charges to which you are to answer. The court will now pro-

ceed without further interruption on the part of the prisoner. Mr. Clerk, read the indictment."

Danie sank hopelessly back in his chair. It became evident that he was to have but little chance for his life; and, as the officer who acted as clerk commenced to read the strange indictment, it appeared to the poor prisoner that his dismal conviction could not have been better founded.

The specifications alleged:—

First. That on a certain day in the month of May, 1900, the prisoner before the court had escaped from the hospital of the military prison at Pietermaritzburg in Natal, breaking a parole which, if not given directly by word of mouth or in writing, had nevertheless been implied and understood, and for a time tacitly agreed to by both parties to the implied agreement, until the prisoner had himself violated it by his escape.

Second. That a few days after his escape from Pietermaritzburg he had appeared at the farm of a certain Hockley in the Pomeroy dis-

trict of Natal, and by means of a false and forged order upon the provost-marshal at Pietermaritzburg, purporting to be signed by a certain Captain F. H. Ainslee of the Intelligence Department, had procured a horse of the value of twenty pounds to aid him in furthering his escape, by his action breaking both the military and the civil laws governing the land.

Third. That on the evening of the sixth day subsequent to the date mentioned in the preceding charge of the indictment he had without provocation or just cause treacherously shot and slain a sergeant of mounted police who was acting legally and in the proper discharge of his duty on the borders of Zululand and the Vaal River Colony.

The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth specifications charged that the prisoner, while conducting a guerilla warfare in the northern and central districts of the Vaal River Colony, had on three different occasions by the use of dynamite destroyed passing trains filled with passengers, both military and civilian, in direct

contravention to the rules and precepts of civilised warfare.

Seventh. That he had hanged, or that others by his order and under his direction had hanged, in violation of one of the most important and widely recognised laws of war, and against all principles of common humanity, one of His Majesty's subjects who had surrendered as a prisoner of war to the prisoner before the court at the town of Hopeton in the Cape Colony in October of the present year, and who was therefore under the care and protection of the latter, the murdered man being by name Jim Kondwana, and at the time of his capture and surrender serving as a member of the mounted police force under His Majesty's officers.

The Eighth, Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth specifications charged separate instances of the prisoner's seducing from their allegiance certain subjects of His Majesty in the Cape Colony, and of arming and inducing them to fight with arms in their hands as rebels against the legal and constituted authority of their country.

The clerk completed the reading of the long and formal document amid a profound silence. For a minute after he had finished there was no sound heard in the court-room except the stamp and snort of one of the judges' horses, tied in a shed outside the open window. The eyes of the court were cast solemnly down, while those of the few military spectators were turned upon the face of the prisoner.

Danie alternately flushed and paled. He was as furious as he was amazed at the twists and turns they had given some of his acts,—at the infernal ingenuity with which they silently based the illegality of those acts alleged as having been committed in Natal on his lack of legal standing as a parole-breaker who had forfeited all belligerent rights; at the fiendish impudence of their description of a parole "not given directly by word of mouth or in writing," but nevertheless "implied and understood" and "tacitly agreed to"! As if such an anomaly could exist! But he saw from these very facts of distortion that his cause was lost in advance, that whatever he should say in

his own defence or in condemnation of his judges would be but careless waste of the little breath left to him in life. So he sat motionless in his chair, looking steadily at the wall above their heads.

Then the presiding officer broke the silence. "What have you to say for yourself, prisoner?" he said, raising his head. "Are you guilty or not guilty?"

Danie still sat dumb, staring at the wall. There was a little rustle in the room. Suddenly two of the younger officers at the table leaned across to their senior, and whispered busily to him for a moment.

"Ah! yes," he answered them, nodding rapidly. Then he looked up again. "You need not plead to the whole indictment, but to its separate clauses, one by one, Linde. Are you guilty or not guilty of the first act charged, —of breaking your parole and escaping from Pietermaritzburg?"

Danie could restrain his wild indignation no longer. It seemed as if all the little blood left in his body leaped to his face. "Oh, they

are worse than Kaffirs," he said within himself. "Well, to *hell* with them! I will tell them what I think, if it is my last act!" He tottered to his feet with blazing eyes, and gripped unsteadily for support at the shoulder of the armed guard who stood beside his chair. "I am not guilty!" he thundered.

The colonel raised his hand. "He pleads Not Guilty to the first charge, Mr. Clerk," he said coldly. "Set it down."

Danie caught his breath, and continued, "I *did* escape from Pietermaritzburg"—

The colonel leaned forward, and interrupted him. "You will change the plea to guilty, Mr. Clerk."

—"but I was not on parole. There was no parole offered or demanded, 'implied' or otherwise," went on Danie, hotly. "Bring your witnesses, that I may question them!"

The colonel laid his hand on a mass of papers lying on the table before him. "We need no witnesses," he said calmly. "We have here, concerning that charge as well as concerning all the other charges, statements and affida-

vits from British officers and from others that are quite sufficient and satisfactory."

"Let me see them!" demanded Danie.

"You cannot," returned his judge, briefly.

"Then I denounce them now and forever as lies,—as false, infamous lies!" roared Danie, beside himself. "As to the rest, I *did* hang the dirty Kaffir in Hopeton. I would have hanged him fifty times over with my own hands if it had been necessary. He had done brutal murder on an innocent boy in Ermelo some months before, and committed another one right before my eyes and those of Major Campbell while a prisoner under my control. My shooting of the sergeant of police by the Umvolosi River was a legal act of war as well as of self-defence. He would have shot me if I had not been too quick for him. As to my dynamiting of trains being contrary to the rules of civilised warfare, I will only say that whenever I did such unpalatable work I followed the instructions set forth in your Lord Wolseley's own handbook on the subject. To finish, I am proud to have proved, as has every other

of our officers who have invaded the Cape Colony, that it still holds Afrikander Boers who are one in heart with their brothers of the Republics, and who are true enough to their real fatherland to fight for it." He fell back quivering with wrath and exertion.

The president bent forward again. "The prisoner pleads guilty to all counts but the second," he said. "So set it down, Mr. Clerk. You have not pleaded to the charge of forgery, prisoner," he added, looking at Danie.

The Boer struggled to rise once more, but could not. "Forgery!" he cried, panting. "Oh, the Hockley horse,—forgery! The charge is too silly, too cowardly, to discuss. I signed him an order with the first name that came into my mind. If the man was fool enough to present an order given him by one whom within six hours he knew to be an escaping prisoner of war"—

"Hold!" cried the president, lifting his hand. "Captain Ainslee, please step forward."

An officer arose near the end of the room, and walked up to the table.

"Your name?" asked the court.

"Charles Theodore Ainslee, sir," he answered.

"Are you connected with the Intelligence Staff?"

"I am, sir."

The president smiled triumphantly. "That will do, sir. You may sit down."

Danie had watched the astonishing little farce with wide-open eyes. For a moment the slight coincidence of name and service puzzled him; but, as he saw that it did not in any way touch the real matter of the signature, he let it pass scornfully. "They are not after proof," he said to himself. "They are hunting for blood. All they wish is an excuse, be it slight as it may."

The members of the court consulted for a few moments in whispers over their table. Then the president rose to his feet.

"Daniel Linde," he said, "stand up." Danie was helped to his feet. The colonel continued, "This court finds you guilty on all counts charged in the indictment against you, and sentences you to be shot to death, the sentence

not to be carried out until after its confirmation by the commander-in-chief of His Majesty's forces in South Africa."

The court-martial was now officially declared closed. Danie's guards led him from the room and back to the hospital, where he sat for hours on the edge of his cot, trying to digest, to grasp the idea that he was soon to be taken out to an open grave, to have his eyes bandaged, and to kneel upon the good earth to be killed, like a dog or a traitor, hated, helpless, miserable, despicable. Death had never before confronted him in so low, so base a form; and it was as incomprehensible as it was almost unrecognisable.

That very evening a letter was brought to the condemned prisoner from his friend Campbell, dated at Pietermaritzburg. Its tenor was not calculated to raise his depressed spirits or strengthen his heart against the ordeal that impended.

"My dear Linde," he read, "I was almost as sorry to hear of your capture as I *should* feel glad. I sincerely hope that my countrymen

at Maatjesfontein are treating you with some of the kindness and consideration you lately showed to me and my officers. It is with great sorrow that I have to inform you that Miss Uys—to whom your letter was safely delivered—has been for some time very ill with typhoid malaria, and lies now in a most serious condition. I will try to inform you if anything of importance takes place."

CHAPTER X.

THE population of Pietermaritzburg, scarcely sixteen thousand at the beginning of the war, had nearly doubled as it progressed by reason of the influx of soldiers, of strangers and sight-seers of all descriptions on their way inland, and of the troops and trains of sick and wounded and prisoners on their way out or to the sea. Everything that came to Durban, the port of Natal, passed to or through Pietermaritzburg, as did also everything going back to Durban and the coast. The new suburbs of the town, the military camps, the camps for the wounded, and the concentration camp held the great majority of those who went to make up the temporary increase to the population. But the streets of the little city could have been paved from end to end with the officers and strangers of all nationalities and the correspondents, real and pretended, who somehow stowed themselves away night after night within its precincts, and filled its streets by day.

The wheels of every kind of society turned at full speed. The social machinery of every class of the inhabitants, and of many a new class imported and set up by the new-comers, ran at full blast. Almost every family of any pretension in the town—and many who made no such claims at all—entertained feverishly night and day. There were houses partisan to both sides; there were houses unaffected to either. The great saloons of public halls and hotels resounded evening after evening to the blaring music of military balls and promenades; there were teas and garden parties and receptions given by and attended by persons of every shade of social and political persuasion. The strangers, the correspondents, and even the British officers were impartial and ubiquitous. They all found their pleasure and excitement wherever they sought it; and they sought it all the time and everywhere.

The great house of the Maritzes was one of the centres of attraction and amusement. Constant streams of invitations passed out of its portals to return in the shape of guests of

all the sorts and conditions the town and camps could afford. Mrs. Maritz offered her hand as often and as imperturbably to the Boer inmate of the concentration camp, out by permission for the evening, as to the British officer about to return to the front; as well to the dubious French correspondent, whose bills at the hotel were in long arrears, as to the silent refugee from the Transvaal, whose eyes were constantly shifting around among the faces of the rest of the company. Martha played tennis with the young, athletic English lieutenants, danced with the stiff, tightly laced Russian attaché, with as bright a face, as apparently warm a heart, as she served tea to the frightened, awkward Boer girl from the northern Transvaal or chatted with the quick, observant American who had "just come over to look on." It was not an unusual thing for a shy, pretty girl of the conquered race to be taken down to dinner on the arm of one of her country's stalwart conquerors, for the commander of the concentration camp to meet as his full and free equal the prisoner to whom he had

that very afternoon grudgingly granted a pass to visit the city. For in the hospitable home of the Maritzes no divisions of class or nationality were, at this period, recognised. Many honest and sincere, as well as many envious or jealous, tongues were stirred to utter condemnation and detraction strong and bitter at the impartially genial course adopted by the Maritzes, remembering that their real sympathies had always professed to lie with the cause of the Republics. But few or none of these harsh and unjust judges understood or appreciated the real service that the two women actually rendered to the burgher cause in their gentle and quiet way. The lot of the poor women in the concentration camp was alleviated, improved, more than once and in more than one way, because the commanding officer had met and talked with and understood, as he never could have done in camp, many of his sad-eyed prisoners for a free moment beneath the Maritz roof. More than a few—indeed, who could say how many?—farms and homesteads in the far Transvaal

and Free State were spared from the flames because the officer in command of the dread detachment wilfully forgot his orders, remembering instead, at sight of the white and trembling inmates, the sweet, pale face and shy tones of the girl into whose eyes he had once looked in the Maritz drawing-rooms or to whom he had talked at that hospitable table.

But Martha Maritz did not neglect the more direct, if less open, opportunities to help and hearten those for whom her own heart went out, greatly though such opportunities had increased since Danie's prison life in Pietermaritzburg had ended through her intervention. Her gentle face, her sympathetic voice, became as familiar in the concentration camp, in the women's hospitals, in the guard-camps of the poor exiles on their way to Saint Helena, as they were still in the old prison-hospital. A part of every day, no matter how she felt nor what the demands of the afternoon or evening, she spent among the sick, the wounded, or the imprisoned. She was their sister of mercy, their angel of hope.

One day, as she was passing down a street in the concentration camp on her usual errand of mercy and kindness, she saw a girl leaning with white cheeks and closed eyes, scarce shadowed by the short black curls that fell languidly about her face, back against the stays of a tent. Struck by something strangely, yet, oh! so faintly familiar in the girl's look, she stopped and gazed at her. The pale girl opened her eyes. Martha started. A feeling of cold apprehension seized her heart, but of what she could not tell. An instinctive fear—it was not, could not be, dislike or repulsion—of the pale girl rose within her. She could not understand it. Then, because she was Martha Maritz, she crushed it down at once and forever. She advanced toward the girl.

"What is your name?" was, against her will, the first thing she said.

The other half rose with astonished eyes from the bench on which she was seated. "My name? It is Bettie Uys. But why"—

Martha held out her impulsive hands and slipped to the bench beside her. "I do not

know, my dear," she said. "Forgive me for the rudeness; but your face attracted me strongly. Lean back again as you were. You look ill. Have you been ill?"

"I have been in the hospital nearly six weeks with typhoid. They thought that I was going to die," answered Bettie, simply.

"Oh!" said Martha, shocked. "That is why I did not see you there. I come from Pietermaritzburg every day to see my poor people, and try to help and comfort them; for they *are* my people, although I was born in Natal and am an English subject. Are you here alone?"

"No," answered Bettie, still a little dazed, "my mother and my little brother are here, too. We came from Ermelo."

With a sudden determination Martha jumped up. "Show me your mother, take me to your mother. I must see her and Colonel West at once. I know him very well, and he will do just what I say."

What Colonel West was to do the surprised Bettie had no idea. But she obeyed her impulsive little visitor, and called her mother.

Martha had a long talk with Mrs. Uys, and then went straight back up the street to Colonel West's office.

That afternoon Martha returned in her carriage, and took Bettie back with her to Pietermaritzburg on a three weeks' leave of absence granted by the gallant commander of the camp.

Bettie thrived like a sunned and watered flower in the luxurious shelter of the Maritz home and under the fostering care her tender hostesses bestowed on her. Every hour of her presence there helped to restore the bloom to her cheeks, the glow to her now shortened curls, and their old brightness to her eyes. Those comforts of civilisation which she had done so long without, and the lack of which had broken down her system and brought her to the gates of death, played no small part in her rapid recovery. A week of daily drives with Martha, of proper food properly prepared, of sound and comfortable sleep at night in the long unwonted luxury of a real bed, served so to set her up that her new friends hardly rec-

ognised her from day to day, so appreciably and agreeably did her appearance change. The advent of her mother and brother, whom Martha also rescued from the durance of Colonel West's camp, helped greatly toward the improvement of her condition. But Martha was still and constantly haunted by a misty recollection of her face. With this recollection, which she could not place or account for, a dark anxiety, or rather dread, was coupled in her mind. On many an occasion when her pretty guest was occupied with her book or needlework, or with others, Martha studied her face in a desperate mental effort to remember where she had seen it, what it meant to her. But she could not solve the problem.

One of the most frequent of Martha's guests and companions during the previous month had been a certain Major Arthur Campbell, whose acquaintance she had made during the winter of 1900, at which time he had been stationed at Pietermaritzburg. He had returned—or rather been brought back—into Natal six or seven weeks before from the Cape

Colony, where in a desperate fight at Cradock, in which with a much inferior force he had routed and dispersed one of the numerous Free State commandos then operating in that colony, he had been severely wounded. Upon his arrival at Pietermaritzburg the hospital surgeons had been obliged to amputate his left arm, which had been badly shattered. After his recovery, which had been rapid, he had devoted a noticeable proportion of the time which hung upon his hands to calling upon the Maritzes and to serving Martha in the capacity of escort or chief of staff in her many expeditions of relief and ministry to the wounded prisoners of war and among the mournful inmates of the concentration camp.

One morning, after Bettie had been in the house some days, he called at his usual hour to ask, as he smilingly put it, for his "orders of the day." Martha received him with the more than ordinary cordiality she had consistently shown him ever since his misfortune.

"Sit down and talk to me, Captain Campbell. I am not going out this morning. We

can have a social little chat together at the expense of nobody's conscience." And she drew a comfortable chair into the sunniest window, setting another near it for herself.

He sat down, and talked commonplaces for a few minutes. But a gradual uneasiness or embarrassment grew upon him, and he soon rose to his feet and began walking up and down before her. She looked up at him in innocent surprise.

"Why, what is the matter with you, you restless invalid? You are not yet as strong as you ought to be; and," she smiled, "with an easy-chair to sit in and a pretty girl to talk to, you ought to be content to remain quiet."

He stopped abruptly in front of her. "That is just the trouble, Miss Maritz," he broke out, blushing painfully. "I could always supply both the easy-chair and the comfortable content if I could have the pretty girl all my life."

Her face grew pale. She rose with dire apprehension in her heart, half opened her lips, and lifted her hand as if to hush him. Being once started, however, he kept stolidly

on, his face burning, his single hand fumbling nervously with the back of his chair, but with his eyes fixed bravely on her face.

"I did not mean to say what I have said," he continued. "I never meant to trouble you or sadden you with my feelings. But they got away from me; and, as I have said so much, I will go on and say it all. I love you. I have loved you ever since I first saw you a year and a half ago. But I have always felt—I feel now—that there is little or no chance of your ever regarding me as I would like to have you. No,"—as he saw her attempt to speak,—"do not stop me now. I must go through with it. I know that I am a cripple, and shall be half helpless all the rest of my life, and that for that very reason I have no right to ask any woman to share her lot with mine. I tell you that I realise the fact even more clearly than you can, for it is I who suffer from it day and night. And yet now, coward that I am, I am asking you to marry me,—without any hope of your caring for me enough to do so," he added hurriedly, as he

saw her lips again begin to move. "But, if you could, Martha,—O God! if you *could*"—He was suddenly silent, and looked at her with half a hope almost daring to dawn in his eyes.

Her own were filled with tears of the sincerest sorrow. She shook her head.

"It is impossible," she whispered, "although you are very dear to me as a friend. But you are an enemy of my real country, and—and"—She clasped her hands together in her emotion. "But I—I would *never* have you believe that it was on account of your poor arm that I would not marry you! If I could love you as much—as much as that,—I should never think of it, or, rather, it would be something to make me more loving, more helpful, more tender to you than ever. It is not all the fact that you are English, either, although on that account I should cut myself off from my countrymen for years. But that would be nothing. There is— Oh, go now, and forgive me; and come back to-morrow as you were, a friend!"

His face was white as he held out his hand. "I shall have to go forever," he said sorrow-

fully. "For I could not return as I was. Good-bye."

She let him go.

As he moved toward the door, it was suddenly thrown open, and Bettie ran in with a horror-stricken face, holding an open newspaper in her hand. He had to jump back to avoid her. But the girl did not see him. She ran straight to Martha, who was still standing in the window.

"Oh," she gasped, "oh, they are going to kill him,—to murder him,—my love, my own! What can I do to save him, my God!" She stumbled over a chair, and fell into it, half fainting.

Campbell, who had sprung after her as he thought to see her fall, took the paper from her hands, and glanced at the spot at which she held her finger. He gave a cry of astonishment and horror almost equal to her own, and read the paragraph aloud:—

"The Boer commandant, Daniel Linde, who was wounded and captured at Maatjesfontein on the 18th of November after a desperate

struggle at the railroad, was last week sentenced by a court-martial held in the same town to be shot for his numerous illegal acts of war. The sentence was sent to Pretoria to the commander-in-chief for confirmation. The confirmation, which has been delayed, is expected to arrive at any moment."

"Oh!" he cried again. "Linde! My"—

He was interrupted from behind. "Let me see it," whispered Martha, tensely. Her face, as pale and cold as marble, was bending over his arm, her odorous hair nearly touching his cheek, while her burning eyes sought the page. She read the little paragraph in silence, once, twice, slowly and again. Then she raised her regard to his. "What can be done, indeed?" she asked in tones of utter grief.

Campbell's own feelings were such that he had hardly noticed the new expression of horror on his beloved's face, the pitiful agony in her eyes. But it suddenly struck him that here was something more than mere sympathy seemed to warrant. "Did you know him, also?" he cried.

"Ah!" she said with a new look in her eyes, "then *you* did! It was *I* who saved him, who helped him to his escape from the prison-hospital here in Pietermaritzburg more than a year ago. It is *you, you alone,* who can save him now."

Before the man had comprehended more than half the import of her tones, her words, Bettie, who had caught the sense of the last, ran forward to Campbell, and hung upon his arm.

"Oh, yes," she wailed, "whoever you are, have pity. You can save him, you must save him. He is mine! Do not let them take him from me forever!"

Martha had forgotten the very existence of the girl in her first terrible stress of emotion at hearing of Danie's fate. But, as she looked at her now in astonishment, there suddenly arose before her eyes the picture of a man dressed in the uniform of a British captain of cavalry, standing at a window in a little house near by, gazing intently at a locket on his wrist. And the portrait at which he was gazing was

that of the girl who stood before her! The memory rushed upon her mind with all completeness. Here was the resemblance, the recollection that so long had puzzled and disturbed her. This was the girl who had stared so calmly out at her from the miniature while her very heart was breaking within her! This was the girl for whom she had saved the man whom now neither of them had power to save again,—for whom she would then, as now, have saved him at the cost of her own life, had it come to that, with glad and utter resignation! Because she loved him. And she loved him still. The second renunciation was at hand.

"I know you now, Bettie Uys," she said gently. "I have seen your face before, even in the bracelet which Mr. Linde wore. He showed it to me the night he escaped from Pietermaritzburg. Trust me, my dear, we will save his life again. I *promise* you we will do so."

She led the half-conscious girl to the chair, and laid her back in it, kissing her forehead softly. Then she crossed again to Campbell,

and said with a quivering voice: "You told me a few minutes ago that you would—could never return to me on the old footing. But go now, at once, to Pretoria. You have influence: you have deserved reward. See the commander-in-chief,—see whom you can in power. Save Mr. Linde's life for—for Bettie's sake. Then,—when you have done so,"—she lowered her eyes and dropped her tone to a whisper he could scarcely hear,—"then come back to me as—as you wish."

He raised her cold hand to his lips, and was gone.

Two days later a telegram was brought to Martha. She opened it with a chill of terror. It contained just six words: "Sentence commuted. I am coming back." She called the trembling Bettie, handed it to her silently, with averted face, and then, escaping to her own room, threw herself on her bed in a paroxysm of tears.

CHAPTER XI.

ON the morning of the memorable 1st of June, 1902, the church bells of every town and village in South Africa pealed forth the happy tidings of peace as the news from Pretoria was flashed the length and breadth of the continent. The war was over.

In a small, square, whitewashed cell of the big prison at Graaff Reinet a lonely prisoner, sitting mournfully on his little pallet, raised his head. Through the narrow, barred opening of the window high in the wall above him came the stirring and unwonted sound of the merry chimes from the bell-towers down the long street. Faint shouts of an apparently joyful tenor, the far but seemingly hilarious murmurs of a crowd, accompanied the ringing. What had happened? he asked himself. Had the English won another great victory over his miserable countrymen? He laid his face in his hands, and groaned aloud.

After waiting two weeks at Maatjesfontein for the confirmation of his death sentence to

arrive from army headquarters, Danie had one day been taken out under guard to a train, and carried to Graaff Reinet—a little town in the eastern centre of the colony—by way of De Aar Junction and Middelburg, thus crossing for the second time the Richmond district which he had on the first occasion of his passing swept from end to end with his brave commando. He was told nothing, while on the way, of his fate or of his destination. Upon his arrival he had been taken straight to the prison, and put into the cell he had since occupied for six long, weary months. Had his sentence been confirmed? He did not know. There were times when he even *feared* that it had not. Even death itself was better than this living death; for he had no expectation of ever leaving his prison except for a worse one, possibly Saint Helena. As for Bettie, she was dead. He had made up his mind to that. What was there then to live for? Why did they make him live?

His country, too, he assured himself for the hundredth time, sitting there in his solitary

cell, was dead or dying. The merry bells, the joyful shouts outside, but announced another, possibly the last blow struck at its fading life. More misery!

Suddenly the door of his cell was flung wide, and his burly, red-faced jailer stamped jovially in, accompanied by a strong smell of liquor. How strangely he was acting, thought Danie, raising his head in his surprise; but he had no time for further thought. The man grasped his hand, and shook it strenuously.

"Come out, you chappie," he said with a broad grin,—"come out! What are you staying in this dirty place for? Come out! You are free. It's peace,—peace, I tell you! I got my orders to release all my prisoners this morning. Come out, and have a drink!"

Danie was so dazed that he hardly understood what the man was saying; but, taught a strange obedience by his prison life, he rose, and followed mechanically without objection. It was not until they had passed out of the prison gates into the free air and sunlight of the street outside that he noticed that he was

unguarded, unwatched. He turned, trembling, to his erst-while jailer.

"What was it you were saying a minute ago, —about peace, or my being free, or something?"

The other roared with great laughter, and clapped him on the shoulder. "Well, danged if the cuss don't want to go back! Why, man," he shouted, "peace has been declared, I tell you. You're no Boer now. You're a free man in every sense of the word,—you're a colonial, you're a British subject! Don't you understand? That's what them bells is ringin' for! That's what we're goin' to drink to! Come on with me!"

The trees, the people in the street, danced before Danie's eyes. So it had really come at last! The war was over! The Transvaal was no more, and he himself was now a legal subject of Great Britain. He had known for a long time that it would come. The pangs, the agony of his first realisation of the inevitable end, had long passed away. The dull, heavy grief that was left, that filled him yet, was nevertheless unable quite to still or even to

check the great gladness that rose within him as he felt that he was free,—that he could at last look the trees, the grass, the flowers, and the birds in the face without let or hindrance, without envy or shame! He threw his arms aloft, and, turning his mouth upward, drew great breaths of cold, clean air into his lungs, bathing his face in the full sunlight. Yes, if he was a British subject, he was also a free man, free to seek Bettie (she might not, after all, be dead), his parents, his friends,—those that were left. And Baakenhoogte,—home! The dear kopjes, the rocks, the trees, the little stream, would still remain. They could not have taken away or destroyed nature itself!

He followed the lead of his old jailer—now his jailer no longer, thank God!—across the street to the tap-room. A vociferous, cheering, shouting crowd stood in front of the bar, almost filled the room. It was very evident that something of importance had happened.

The jailer jumped on top of the bar itself, covered as it was with glasses and bottles. Not at all disturbed by the crash which followed the

intrusion of his clumsy feet among the crockery and glassware, he seized a bottle from the wood beside him and held it high.

"Silence!" he shouted, "silence! I want you gentlemen to drink with me—line up, all of you—to the health of this gentleman here. His name is Linde,—Commandant Linde! Last night he was still a Boer and a prisoner; but now, by God, he's a true blue Britisher, like ourselves!" He raised the bottle to his lips, and drank long and deep.

The surprised crowd hastily followed his example, after a short hurrah which testified, perhaps, as much to their appreciation of the hospitality of their entertainer as to their feeling for the new-made subject of His Majesty. However, those who formed with the embarrassed Boer the outskirt of the assemblage, either through choice or through inability to force their way to the front, turned to him, and shook his hand until it ached, with every evidence of kindliness and welcome.

Thus was Danie initiated into the brotherhood of Britons.

As he passed out into the street five minutes later, homeless, penniless, hungry, friendless,—having said farewell to the riotous crowd and their leader, his late guardian, in the tap-room where it was apparent they meant to spend the rest of the day,—he felt some one touch him on the shoulder. A well-dressed man with a sad face partly covered by a grey beard stood at his elbow.

"Commandant," said the stranger, speaking in Dutch, "my name is Ockert Els. I am a Colonial Boer. I shall feel greatly honoured if you will come and spend the night at my house, and allow me to offer you the assistance necessary to carry you back to the Transvaal, where I suppose your heart is urging you. I can well imagine that you have no means left after what you have gone through."

Tears of gratitude started to Danie's eyes. He held out his hand. "I will accept your offer with all my heart, Mr. Els," he stammered. "As you say, I have nothing left me,—nothing; and I was wondering to myself how in the world I should ever get home to my

friends and family. I rather fear that my brother Englishmen in there would forget that I had become a Briton, and only remember that I was a Boer and an enemy, if it were proposed that I should share anything more than a drink with them."

He went with Mr. Els to his house, where he received the greatest kindness and consideration from each one of the family. The next morning, provided with respectable clothing and funds enough to proceed to Lydenburg by rail, Danie shook the dust of Graaff Reinet from his feet.

At Middelburg in the Transvaal he heard that his parents were still there in the concentration camp. He left the train, and crossed through the town to the camp, that lay spread against the slope of the randt beside the river. At the entrance of the camp he inquired from the British sentry still on duty the location of Fanie Linde's tent.

"It's the third tent down the second street, on the right, sir," answered the man, politely; "but old Linde died some months ago."

Danie stopped short. His heart froze within him at the dreadful news. But he said nothing, and, recovering himself, at once walked on.

The flaps of the tent were not drawn back, but hung loosely, closing its entrance. With his blood pounding at his pulses, he cautiously drew one of them aside, and peered in. His mother and two sisters, dressed in such poor mourning as they had been able to collect, sat despondently on their rough, unmattressed cots. Their faces were browned by the long camp life; but otherwise how changed! Their cheeks and temples were thin and sunken, their faded eyes, tired by much weeping, lacked lustre, even interest. Nevertheless, as the tent flap was lifted and the unexpected light broke in on their dismal surroundings, they looked up startled at the face within the entrance.

None of them recognised him. Well, if that white-haired old woman was his mother, these two thin, sickly women his pretty sisters, why, perhaps he, too, had changed more than he thought. He stifled his disappointment.

"Goeden dag, Moeder," he said, smiling at her.

Ah, that was his voice! That voice neither the lapse of years nor the semi-obscurity in which he stood could change, could prevent her recognising. With a great cry she was about his neck in an instant.

"O Danie, O my boy," she sobbed, "is it you,—is it really you? Have you come back to me once more? Thank God! Thank God! Oh, if your poor father"— She broke completely down. He picked her wasted body up in his arms, and carried her over to her cot, and laid her down, kneeling beside her.

"I know, dear mother,—I know," he whispered. "I was told—outside. But I have come to take you home, and there is not to be any more war or any more parting."

He soothed her agitation with words and caresses, at the same time drawing his sisters down beside him. "Dear Lenie, dear Elsie!" he said, embracing them with his free arm. "Oh, how that bright hair is faded! How white and pinched your faces are, dear girls!

But we are going back,—going home! And six months at Baakenhoogte will bring the shine and the flesh and the roses back. We will build the old place up as it was before,—all the kraals and the sheds and your flower gardens in the same old places. There is some of the house yet standing. I saw the place a year ago. It shall be all the same!" But with the assurance the thought of his father came to him, and he bit his lip and was silent. No, it could never be quite the same again.

The next day Danie managed to borrow some money of one of his father's old friends, and arranged with the authorities for the loan of a team of oxen, a wagon, and a tent to serve as a shelter on the farm until he could rebuild, at least in part, the house.

Then, with his mother and sisters, he started on the seventy-mile trek for Lydenburg and home.

CHAPTER XII.

IT was indeed a sad home-coming. The once beautiful farmstead was now a miserable heap of ruins. The few bare walls still standing could not be depended upon as supports for new floors or a new roof, weakened and shaken as they had been by the flames that so long ago had surged about them. The trees and hedges that had surrounded the house at the time of its destruction were yet bare of leaves, the scorched and naked branches reaching out like appealing arms to the serene skies above them. The stones of the kraals were overgrown with the grass that covered them, as if trying to conceal, not only their pitiful remnants, but the very places of their location.

Danie set to work with feverish energy to construct as comfortable a temporary dwelling for his little family as he could with the work of his own hands. The few Kaffirs who occupied the wrecks of the native huts on the place could not be induced to work for their old employers. The English, they stated had

taken the country, so that the farm no longer belonged to the Lindes; and they themselves, having assisted the British troops in their conquest, were, according to the promises of the English officers, the rightful owners of the soil. They even went so far as to threaten Danie with violence; and he was obliged to seek protection from the authorities stationed, during the interregnum, at Lydenburg. Such, and worse, were the conditions that for a while obtained in the Transvaal after the end of the war.

He was wild with desire to see or hear from Bettie, although his extreme anxiety and uncertainty had been partly stilled by the information given him by his sisters on the way home, to the effect that they had learned a month before that Bettie was recovered from her illness and living in comfort at Pietermaritzburg. But he felt it to be his first duty to provide some sort of comfort for his widowed mother and his sisters before he could decently leave them to seek the girl of his heart. So he resolutely set his desires aside, and toiled

ms out-

faithfully and energetically on in his work of restoration and evolution.

Toward the end of July, Danie obtained possession, after a deal of trouble, of his father's interdicted moneys. He was then enabled to buy the necessary building material for the construction of new buildings, and to restock the farm.

By the end of the next month Baakenhoogte had resumed much of its old appearance. The new buildings were up,—though some of them in crude fashion,—and new servants indentured and broken in, doing their work under the superintendence of two of Danie's old companions in his first commando, who had come to make with him all the home they expected to care for further in this world. He felt now that he could safely and honourably leave his mother for a short period of days, while he went to Ermelo. For the Uyses also had at last returned.

The ten miles that lay between Blaauwkop and the town he covered within the hour. As

he approached the vicinity of the farm, his heart gave a great leap; for over the wide area that used to proclaim the industry and prosperity of Dirk Uys he saw again the grazing sheep, the high-stacked ricks of corn and grain, the signs of the tilled and cultivated fields. Through the calm afternoon air above the little randt that still hid the farmstead from his sight a curling wreath of smoke rose peacefully toward the track of the sun. With the ecstasy of a great joy surging over his heart he moved to the top of the rise before him.

The scene that met his eyes was one of peaceful charm and promise of delight. Blaauwkop, like Baakenhoogte, had rerisen from its ashes, though smaller, frailer, less substantial than it had once been. But the gardens grew again, and their flowers bloomed about its walls and doors. He sat motionless, breathless, as if carved in stone, his eyes fixed through their glad tears on the quiet dwelling. Then with a great cry of love he drove his spurs into his horse's flanks, and dashed down the well-re-

membered road to the home of his beloved, the treasury of his happiness.

He flung himself from his horse in front of the house, and ran up the little stoep. But, ere he could reach it, the door was opened. Before him stood Bettie, the bright, the beautiful, with rose-flushed cheeks and shining eyes, her arms outstretched.

THE END.

We invite your attention to a selected list of our publications, to be found on the following pages

"Mr. DOOLEY'S" Inimitable Humor

By Finlay Peter Dunne

"Mr. Dooley must be added to the acquaintance of all who esteem good sense and good humor. He is worthy to take his place as a national satirist beside Hosea Biglow." — *The Academy*, London.

Mr. DOOLEY: In Peace and in War

(70th thousand)

"We awoke in the morning to kneel at the shrine of Dooley, and to confess that here was the very fellow we had long been waiting for,— here at last America's new humorist." — MAX PEMBERTON, in *The London Daily Mail.*

"Full of wit and humor and real philosophy which rank their possessor among those humorists who have really made a genuine contribution to permanent literature." — HARRY THURSTON PECK, in *The Bookman.*

"His eloquence is a torrent, and his satire as strong and stinging as a slave-driver's whip."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

12mo, green cloth, decorative, $1.25.

Mr. DOOLEY: In the Hearts of his Countrymen (35th thousand)

"The depression that could prevail against the influence of 'Mr. Dooley's' ebullient drollery, gay wisdom, and rich brogue would be profound indeed, and its victim would be an altogether hopeless case."— *The London World.*

"His new book shows no falling off: his wit is as nimble as ever, his eye as quick to note incongruities, his satire as well directed and as brilliant." — *The Academy*, London.

12mo, blue cloth, decorative, $1.25

SMALL, MAYNARD & COMPANY

Publishers, Boston

A MASTERPIECE OF AMERICAN HUMOR AND SOUND SENSE

225,000 COPIES ALREADY SOLD

Universally pronounced
"The Wisest and Wittiest Book of its Generation"

LETTERS FROM A SELF-MADE MERCHANT TO HIS SON

By George Horace Lorimer

In addition to its great success in this country, this book has held first place among the best selling books in England and in Canada, and has already been published in translations in Germany and in Japan.

"There has been nothing since the wisdom of Franklin that is to be placed in the same class as this common-sense book." —*St. Louis Globe Democrat.*

"As humor, pure and simple, the 'Letters' will evoke more smiles to the minute than anything that has been issued as pure fun in recent years." —*New York Press.*

"For dry, caustic humor, pithy common sense, and good advice, relieved by excellent stories capitally told, [we have] not lately read anything that nearly equals these letters." —*Punch* (London).

"The father is a philosophic symphony in pork that can write letters that stamp him as a self-made combination of Lord Chesterfield and Josh Billings." —*Judge* (New York).

"The wholesomest, helpfullest, jolliest book of the year." —*Chicago Record Herald.*

12mo, cloth, decorative, 328 pp., fully illustrated. Price, $1.50.

SMALL, MAYNARD & COMPANY
Publishers, Boston

By Holman F. Day

UP IN MAINE. Stories of Yankee Life told in Verse.

Few books of verse have won popular favor so quickly as this volume, which is already in its eleventh thousand. It is a rare combination of wit, humor, sense, and homely pathos.

"Reading the book, one feels as though he had Maine in the phonograph."— *The New York Sun.*

"James Russell Lowell would have welcomed this delicious adjunct to 'The Biglow Papers.' "— *The Outlook.*

"So fresh, so vigorous, and so full of manly feeling that they sweep away all criticism."— *The Nation.*

12mo, cloth, decorative, six illustrations, $1.00.

PINE TREE BALLADS. Rhymed Stories of Unplaned Human Natur' up in Maine.

Of Mr. Day's latest book, already in its fifth thousand, the *Chicago Record-Herald* says: —

"It is impossible to think of any person or class of people in America that these epical lyrics, these laughter-fetching, tear-provoking ballads will fail to please."

12mo, cloth, decorative, gilt top, illustrated.
Net $1.00, by post $1.10.

KIN O' KTAADN. Verse Stories of the Plain Folk who are Keeping Bright the Old Home Fires up in Maine.

Although called "Verse Stories," Mr. Day's new volume is not merely a book of poetry. The half-hundred new poems, grouped in appropriate sections, are woven together into a consistent and harmonious unity by a thread of prose comment and chat, thus giving such a picture of the lights and shadows of homely Yankee life as has never before been printed. The book is unique in its conception and shows evidence of marked growth in the power of its author, which places him high up among the best writers of New England.

12mo, cloth, decorative, with frontispiece portrait, and with six illustrative decorations by Amy Rand.

Net $1.00, by post $1.10.

NOTE.— The above three volumes can be supplied in uniform binding, boxed in sets. Price per set, net $3.00, by post $3.25.

SMALL, MAYNARD & COMPANY

Publishers, Boston

AN INDISPENSABLE BOOK
FOR EVERY BUSINESS MAN

The THEORY of ADVERTISING

A Simple Exposition of the Principles of Psychology in their Relation to Successful Advertising.

By WALTER DILL SCOTT, Ph.D.,

Director of the Psychological Laboratory of Northwestern University.

THE most practical and useful book on its important subject that has yet appeared, offering much needed help to every business man who feels it necessary to advertise in the most effective manner and with the greatest real economy. With this special class of readers in mind, Professor Scott has carefully revised the chapters which attracted such wide and favorable comment during their recent serial publication in *Makin's Magazine*. The result is a basic book, which in simple terms and plain language explains the psychological effect of advertisements, and opens the reader's mind to a comprehension of the general principles which underlie the whole subject, thereby enabling him to make an intelligent application of these principles to the requirements of the special case in hand. Copiously illustrated with reproductions of recent advertisements, criticised in the light of the general principles discussed, and of advertisements made up in accordance with some of the suggestions of the volume.

8vo, half leather, gilt top, copiously illustrated.
Price, $2.00 net. By post, $2.15

SMALL, MAYNARD & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS, BOSTON

A Standard Library of Biography

The BEACON BIOGRAPHIES

OF EMINENT AMERICANS

Edited by M. A. De Wolfe Howe

THE aim of this series is to furnish brief, readable, and authentic accounts of the lives of those Americans whose personalities have impressed themselves most deeply on the character and history of their country. They are primarily designed for the general reader who desires to obtain in brief compass the accurate and interesting statement of essential facts. Each volume is equipped with a frontispiece portrait, a calendar of important dates, and a brief bibliography for further reading. Finally, the volumes are printed in a form convenient for reading and for carrying handily in the pocket.

Of this series the *Boston Herald* has said: "They contain exactly what every intelligent American ought to know about the lives of our great men."

For list of titles see next page.

"Prepared as carefully as if they were so many imperial quartos, instead of being so small that they may be carried in the pocket."— *New York Times.*

"They are books of marked excellence."— *Chicago Inter-Ocean.*

"They interest vividly, and their instruction is surprisingly comprehensive."— *The Outlook.*

24mo, cloth, gilt top. Price per volume, 75c. net, by post 80c.

SMALL, MAYNARD & COMPANY

Publishers, Boston

THE BEACON BIOGRAPHIES

The following volumes are issued: —

Louis Agassiz, by Alice Bache Gould.
John James Audubon, by John Burroughs.
Edwin Booth, by Charles Townsend Copeland.
Phillips Brooks, by M. A. De Wolfe Howe.
John Brown, by Joseph Edgar Chamberlin.
Aaron Burr, by Henry Childs Merwin.
James Fenimore Cooper, by W. B. Shubrick Clymer.
Stephen Decatur, by Cyrus Townsend Brady.
Frederick Douglass, by Charles W. Chesnutt.
Ralph Waldo Emerson, by Frank B. Sanborn.
David G. Farragut, by James Barnes.
Ulysses S. Grant, by Owen Wister.
Alexander Hamilton, by James Schouler.
Nathaniel Hawthorne, by Mrs. James T. Fields.
Father Hecker, by Henry D. Sedgwick, Jr.
Sam Houston, by Sarah Barnwell Elliott.
"Stonewall" Jackson, by Carl Hovey.
Thomas Jefferson, by Thomas E. Watson.
Robert E. Lee, by William P. Trent.
Henry W. Longfellow, by George Rice Carpenter.
James Russell Lowell, by Edward Everett Hale, Jr.
Samuel F. B. Morse, by John Trowbridge.
Thomas Paine, by Ellery Sedgwick.
Daniel Webster, by Norman Hapgood.
John Greenleaf Whittier, by Richard Burton.

A COMPANION SERIES TO THE BEACON BIOGRAPHIES

The Westminster Biographies

OF EMINENT ENGLISHMEN

Robert Browning, by Arthur Waugh.
Daniel Defoe, by Wilfred Whitten.
Adam Duncan (Lord Camperdown), by H. W. Wilson.
George Eliot, by Clara Thomson.
Cardinal Newman, by A. R. Waller and G. H. Barrow.
John Wesley, by Frank Banfield.

Price per volume in either series, cloth, net 75c., by post 80c.

SMALL, MAYNARD & COMPANY, BOSTON

The Writings of

Charlotte Perkins Gilman

(Charlotte Perkins Stetson)

WOMEN AND ECONOMICS. A Study of the Economic Relation between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution . . . $1.50

The fact that this book has reached its fifth edition in America, its third edition in Great Britain, and that it has also been translated into Dutch, German, Italian, French, and Russian, proves that it expresses in a striking way its analysis and explanation of woman's position in modern society and its remedial plans for the future.

"No one who wishes to be up-to-date should neglect this bright book." — *Ethical Record.*

12mo, cloth, paper label.

CONCERNING CHILDREN $1.25

Original and helpful essays looking toward the better understanding of children and their more sensible and healthy development. Notable for the soundness of its philosophy, its charm of style, and the piquancy of its wit.

"Every parent ought to read this book." — *The Outlook.*

12mo, cloth, decorative.

IN THIS OUR WORLD $1.25

Mr. Howells, in *Harper's Weekly*, has called this verse the best civic satire which America has produced since "The Biglow Papers." A new edition, containing many new poems and a portrait of Mrs. Stetson in photogravure.

16mo, cloth, decorative, gilt top.

THE YELLOW WALL PAPER . . . 50c.

"A conceit fantastical enough to have emanated from the brain of Edgar Poe. It is written with remarkable vividness, as if the writer had experienced something very like [that] which she describes. The story has a purely literary justification, but is none the worse for teaching a lesson which some husbands and parents would do well to heed." — *The Christian Register.*

12mo, paper boards, decorative.

SMALL, MAYNARD & COMPANY
Publishers, Boston

STANDARD EDITIONS of THE WRITINGS OF WALT WHITMAN

NEW and definitive editions issued under the superintendence of Whitman's Literary Executors, and prepared with careful attention to accuracy and to perfection of typography. The only complete and authorized trade editions of Whitman's works, and the only such editions which in contents and arrangement conform with Whitman's wishes and his final instructions to his Executors.

LEAVES OF GRASS. Including Sands at Seventy, Good Bye My Fancy, Old Age Echoes (posthumous additions), and A Backward Glance o'er Travelled Roads.

Library Edition, 8vo, gilt top, gold decorative, two portraits, and index of first lines. Price . $2.00

The same, Popular Edition, 12mo, cloth binding, with portrait 1.00

The same, paper covers 50

COMPLETE PROSE WORKS.

Library Edition, 8vo, gilt top, gold decorative. Five full-page illustrations and a facsimile . 2.00

Popular Edition, 12mo, cloth, with portrait . 1.25

Each of these volumes is uniform with the corresponding edition of "Leaves of Grass."

LETTERS

Calamus. Letters to Peter Doyle . . . $1.25

The Wound Dresser. Hospital Letters in War-time 1.50

SELECTIONS FROM THE PROSE AND POETRY OF WALT WHITMAN. Edited with an introductiom and a brief bibliography by Oscar Lovell Triggs, Ph.D., of the University of Chicago. 12mo, cloth, with portrait of Walt Whitman 1.25

SMALL, MAYNARD & COMPANY
Publishers, Boston

STANDARD AMERICAN POETRY

By Richard Hovey

ALONG THE TRAIL. A Book of Lyrics . $1.50
"He is a true and perhaps a great poet."— *The Bookman.*

LAUNCELOT AND GUENEVERE. A Poem in Dramas. 4 vols., 16mo, half vellum, gold decoration.

I.	The Quest of Merlin	$1.25
II.	The Marriage of Guenevere	1.50
III.	The Birth of Galahad	1.50
IV.	Taliesin	1.00

"Nothing since Swinburne's 'Atalanta in Calydon' surpasses [these dramas] in virility and classic clearness and perfection of thought."— JOEL BENTON.

By Bliss Carman

LOW TIDE ON GRAND PRE. A Book of Lyrics $1.25
BEHIND THE ARRAS. A Book of the Unseen 1.25
BALLADS OF LOST HAVEN. A Book of the Sea 1.25
BY THE AURELIAN WALL and other Elegies 1.25
A WINTER HOLIDAY 75

"Mr. Carman is a poet in every fibre of his mortal frame, with a Keats-like sensitiveness to beauty."— *Boston Transcript.*

By John B. Tabb

POEMS $1.00
LYRICS 1.00
CHILD VERSE 1.00

"Sidney Lanier and Father Tabb are, so far, the most poetical poets who have chanced to be American."— *Illustrated London News.*

SMALL, MAYNARD & COMPANY, BOSTON

A NEW HOLIDAY EDITION

OF THE THREE SERIES OF

SONGS from VAGABONDIA

By BLISS CARMAN and RICHARD HOVEY

I. SONGS FROM VAGABONDIA
II. MORE SONGS FROM VAGABONDIA
III. LAST SONGS FROM VAGABONDIA

THIS edition is printed on a fine grade of paper of English manufacture, with decorative end-papers drawn by Tom B. Meteyard, and is bound in special rough-finished olive brown calfskin, with gilt top and untrimmed edges, and with side and back stamps in gold. It is sold only in boxed sets of three volumes.

Price, $3.00 net per set; by post, $3.10.

The authors of the small joint volumes called "Songs from Vagabondia" have an unmistakable right to the name of poet. These little snatches have the spirit of a gypsy Omar Khayyám. They have always careless *verve* and often careless felicity. They are masculine and rough, as roving songs should be. . . . You have the whole spirit of the book in such an unforgettable little lyric as "In the House of Idiedaily."— FRANCIS THOMPSON, in *Merry England.*

NOTE.— The regular edition of these books, bound in paper boards, is still furnished singly or in sets at $1.00 per volume.

SMALL, MAYNARD & COMPANY
Publishers, Boston

THREE IMPORTANT VOLUMES

THE FUTURE OF THE AMERICAN NEGRO

(15th thousand)

By BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

This book, Mr. Washington's most important contribution to literature, recites briefly the history of the Negro race in America and their present conditions. But the main body of the work is devoted to the expression of the author's theories as to what will better their condition; and he explains fully the practical working out of his theories of industrial education as exemplified in his school at Tuskegee.

"A work that should command the attention of every person interested in the future conditions of the United States."—*Philadelphia Inquirer.*

12mo, cloth, gilt top, photogravure portrait, $1.50

TUSKEGEE: Its Story and its Work

By MAX BENNETT THRASHER

With an introduction by Booker T. Washington and fifty half-tone illustrations.

"Almost every question one could raise in regard to the school and its work, from 'Who is Booker Washington?' to 'What do people think of Tuskegee?' is answered in this book."—*New Bedford Standard.*

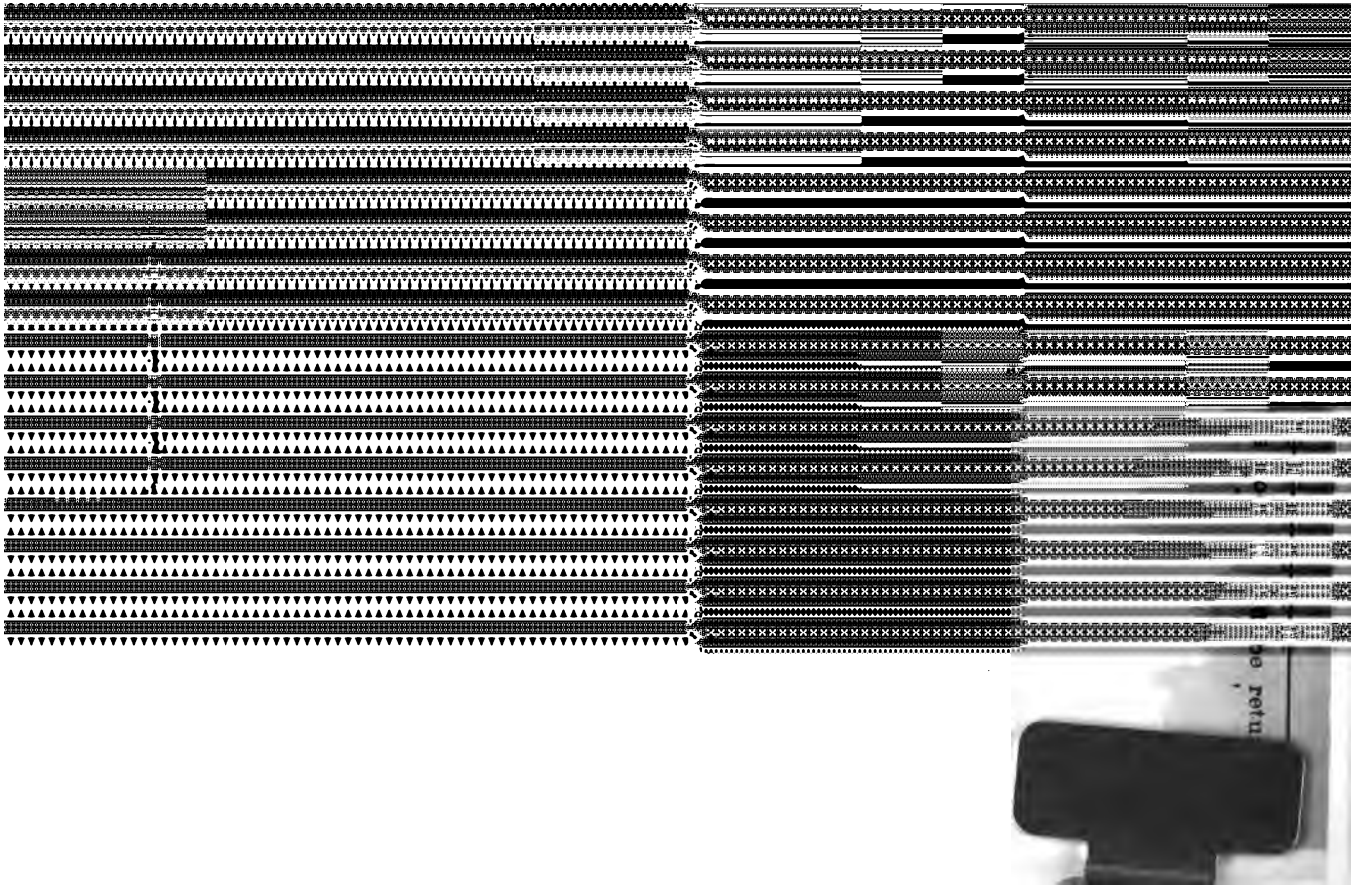
12mo, cloth, decorative, illustrated, $1.00

THE MIDDLE FIVE, Indian Boys at School

By FRANCIS LA FLESCHE

An "Indian Tom Brown at Rugby," told by an Indian. With a frontispiece in color and a cover design by Angel de Cora.

"Any boy worthy of the name must delight in it."—*Rebecca Harding Davis.*

12mo, cloth, decorative, $1.25

SMALL, MAYNARD & COMPANY
Publishers, Boston